



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

John Harholm's Heir



E. E. ARMES

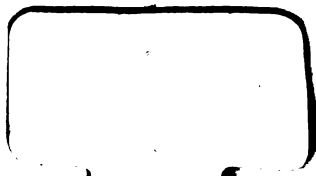
AL795.5.15



Harvard College Library

FROM

Gratis.





JOHN VARHOLM'S HEIR

**JOHN VARHOLM'S
HEIR**

OR

THE DENWOLD MILLS

BY

E. E. ARMES



**FITCHBURG
SENTINEL PRINTING COMPANY
MCMV**

AL 795.5.15

Harvard College Library
MAF 25 1911
Gratia.

COPYRIGHT, 1905, BY THE FITCHBURG HOME FOR OLD LADIES
FITCHBURG, MASS.

TO MY FRIENDS

WITHOUT WHOSE CONSTANT SYMPATHY,

ENCOURAGEMENT AND

ASSISTANCE, THIS BOOK COULD

NEVER HAVE BEEN

PUBLISHED

"The higher the state of civilization, the more completely do the actions of one member of the social body influence all the rest, and the less possible is it for any one man to do a wrong thing without interfering more or less with the freedom of all his fellow-citizens."

—*Professor Huxley.*

JOHN VARHOLM'S HEIR

CHAPTER I.

TEN o'clock on a bright June morning! Not a sound broke the stillness, except the occasional flutter of a bird among the leaves, and the hum of insects in the grass. A little dash of rain the previous night had laid the dust, and the crystal drops still clung to the grass-blades and rested on the pink and white clover-heads in the shade of the elms and maples.

The stranger who was walking leisurely along the platform had reached the town by the 9.40 express, and unconscious of being closely watched by the crowd which usually lounged around the depot, paused and was glancing curiously about. As the huge engine drew out of the station, he lifted his hat to a fellow traveler who stood on the platform of the rear car; then, as the train, winding around the bend, vanished from sight, those who were nearest saw, or thought they saw, a look of regret in his eyes as he turned away.

For a moment he seemed undecided, and then collecting himself with a visible effort, he approached a porter and made inquiry. For answer, the latter dropped his box and accompanied him a few rods down the street, pointed

out a shady road, gave him some simple directions, then stood gazing curiously, first at the piece of money in his hand, then at the man who walked away with quick, nervous strides.

"By St. George and the Dragon!"—Laity was an Englishman—"I believe that's the heir himself, an' a mighty good-looking, smooth-spoken chap he is, too! Guess we needn't be afraid o' him, if he has got all the old man's money! Leastwise, I ain't. I wish there were more like him!" and his hand closed tightly over the piece of silver.

"Do you think so?" and Tom Dawson, who had been edging away from the men who were hanging around Powell's saloon near the corner, came up beside him, and stood with mouth wide open, staring after the retreating figure.

"Do you think so? Then he'll be no match for the Colonel, and God help the hands!"

"Why, what's the matter, Tom? Have you and the Colonel quarreled? Bense said you was his right-hand man. Did he kick you out, as he did Bense for that good-for-nothin' Dutcher? I see him las' night, Dutchy, I mean, an' I heerd him talk, too. I was down to the Corners with a trunk, an' while I was a-waiting, him an' another fellow they called Kateson come along. By St. G—, but they were full of fire an' brimstone! They didn't see me at first, or mebbe they didn't care if they did—but if the Colonel don't keep a watch on 'em he'll be sorry," and giving another glance down the road, Laity went back to his work.

Keeping up his rapid walk only until he was sure that he was out of sight of the loungers on the street corner, the stranger fell into a slow, swinging gait, and looked around with an air of decided interest. When opposite the old Varholm place, "Elmcroft," as it was called, he stopped, rested his small traveling bag on the stone wall, laid his light overcoat beside it, and leaned against one of the massive granite posts, between which swung the heavy iron gates.

Tall, fully six feet, but with a breadth of chest which made him seem shorter, a finely poised head, and a strong, handsome face, bronzed now by sun and wind, where it could be seen above the short, curling, yellow beard; hair that matched the beard, and keen, though kindly blue eyes, he looked a typical North-country man. Indeed, ancestors, not so many generations back, had lived in the little red cottage, not far from the great fiord, and tilled the barren farm, till one, more enterprising than the rest, longing for a sight of that larger world of which some returning villagers had told, or of which he had heard from the English sailors who from time to time came into the little fishing port a few miles below, determined to see for himself this land across the sea, this wonderful America, where a poor man might become a prince, and gold be had just for the taking. Only a small pittance could he take with him on this long and dangerous voyage, but then, was he not a sailor, a descendant of a viking? Lars Jansen had said that he could help to work

the ship and save his silver: and, when he reached the land, surely his good education—thanks to the old pastor, who ministered to the spiritual needs of the little village in the valley on the other side of the hill, and was near of kin—would help him to find work; and if nobody needed his brains, why, there were his strong arms and legs, and who knew? He had heard marvelous stories of the successes of men as poor as himself who were determined; and he!—he had courage enough and strength to face the whole world. At any rate, he could and would try, and his restless spirit and fertile imagination painted a “Château en Amerique” fairer than any to be found in Spain before the eyes of his neighbors, who sought to dissuade him. Go he must and find his beautiful dream realized—he never thought of failure. And so, on a fine June morning very like this, he had sailed out of Bergen, followed by the blessings and prayers of villagers who had come so far upon his way with him. He was more fortunate than most of the emigrants who land at Ellis Island nowadays, for his handsome, intelligent face and muscular limbs attracted the attention of a merchant looking for a porter for his great warehouse, who engaged him for the place a few hours after landing.

Lewis Blake, the head of the firm of Blake, Willson & Co., importers of glass and crockery, was an old-time merchant and managed his affairs himself. He it was who hired young Ahl-

strom, and took him about the store, pointing out his duties; meanwhile watching him closely to see just how much he could make him understand. He was evidently well pleased with his man, for when he returned to his office he settled back in his armchair with a look of complacency, muttering, "Bless the fellow, he must be honest with a face like that, or I'm not a judge of men!" When his partner came in he told him of the new porter, feeling well pleased with their good luck in securing the Norseman.

"He's all right, I guess," Willson said a few weeks later, "but he won't be a porter long! we might as well make up our minds to look out for another, and as soon as he can talk English give him a better place, or he'll go where he can get it. He's the straightest fellow we have had for years, and other folks are beginning to see it. Clarkson spoke of him this morning, calling him a young Hercules. He wouldn't mind giving him a good price to take the place of that rascally Burke they discharged last week. Queer doings over there," and he nodded across the street. "I always thought Bartley Clarkson one of the shrewdest men in the city and should have said he knew his business, the financial part of it, even to the fraction of a cent, and now you've heard what they say."

"We can't afford to lose him," was Blake's answer, and the partners turned to their desks.

Meanwhile the new porter seemed to be contented with his work. Always cheerful and po-

lite, his associates soon learned to respect him. He was ready at any time to give them a lift, and was, moreover, willing to take the heavy end of box or bundle, and never had cause to complain of incivility. He spent his evenings in trying to untangle the intricacies of the new language, and was fortunate enough to secure help from an elderly German who boarded in the same house, whom he had the good fortune to render some assistance. Ludwig proved himself so good an instructor that his pupil made rapid progress; so that in a few months he could not only readily understand whatever was said to him, but could make intelligent, if brief, replies. He neglected no opportunity to advance his employers' interests, and in doing so advanced his own. He received successive promotions, preferring to remain with Blake, Willson & Co., who showed their appreciation of his services, rather than accept any of the positions offered to him from time to time by other firms, and in a few years became assistant manager for this firm, and the trusted friend of both partners.

His advance in social life was not less rapid than in his business career. His really fine education, his courteous manners and noble bearing commanded respect and a hearty liking for the man. Both of his employers opened wide the doors of their homes and welcomed him cordially as an honored guest—after, it must be confessed, suitable inquiry had been made in Bergen.

"Old Oscar Ahlstrom is well known in and around Bergen," wrote the consul, "and boasts his descent from a viking; but, whether that be so or no, he, as well as his father and his father's father, has been a member of the assembly which elects the members of the Storting. They are peasants, but no name is more honored, wherever it is heard in the kingdom, as a synonym for courage, honesty and industry. Beside this, his mother's father was the beloved pastor of a parish not far from Stockholm."

Because these two men had received young Ahlstrom, others welcomed him also; so that without any special effort on his part, the young man soon found himself in the front rank of what was in reality the best society, if not the most fashionable, in the city. He had the good fortune to win the affection of the youngest daughter of the senior partner, and for once true love ran smoothly, for Lewis Blake, who had become much attached to him, made no opposition when Ahlstrom went to him in a manly, straightforward way, declared his love for his daughter, Katharine, at the same time presenting proof of his ability to take care of a wife, and asked for her hand. He gave his consent with hearty good wishes and a share in the business as a wedding gift. Ahlstrom lived to a good old age, and amassed by diligence and prudence a considerable fortune, to which his son added by shrewd business talent and fortunate investments. When Paxford Ahlstrom came into his own, he was what the world called rich.

Paxford was not content to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. Long rent rolls and snug dividends on bonds and stocks gave him an income large enough for his most extravagant wishes, and business details were distasteful; he had become fired with political ambition, and because of some real or fancied aid to the government he sought and obtained a consulate, and in spite of the removals and upheavals that are supposed to attend every new administration, managed to hold it for four consecutive terms.

It is his son, Roger, whom we left leaning against the gate-post in the Varholm place. He was close upon eighteen when his father received his first appointment, and had just received his certificate to enter Yale, his father's *alma mater*. After much deliberation it was decided that the lad should remain in America and complete his education, spending his long summer vacation with the family across the sea, and his winter holidays with his father's brother, an old bachelor in New York. After his graduation Roger traveled for a time, then entered one of the famous medical schools in Vienna, where he spent several years. Returning to England, he practiced for a year in one of the large hospitals in London, and at twenty-seven hung out his sign, "Roger V. Ahlstrom, M. D.," and settled down to the duties of his profession. He had always been an enthusiast in medicine and surgery, and soon had all the business he could attend to,

among both the rich and the poor. With both he was a great favorite; with the former, because of his reputed skill and social reputation; and with the latter, because of his kindness of heart and ever-ready response to their calls for aid and sympathy.

At thirty he married pretty Mary Stanley, the daughter of a proud old family in the South of England, and looked upon himself as established for life. His wife was a charming woman, his home one of the most attractive, his profession sufficient to engross his time and attention, and he one of the happiest men in the sea-girt isle. But, alas! the destroying angel entered into his paradise, and three months after his little daughter was laid in his arms, sweet Mary Ahlstrom, clad in her snowy bridal robes, was laid beneath the daisies in one of Devon's fairest nooks.

The blow was a terrible one, for Roger Ahlstrom had loved as few men love. The strong, tender nature of the man had so entwined itself about his wife that the rude tearing away of its tendrils had well-nigh shattered hope and wrecked his life; but, for his child's sake, he crushed his grief, and in ministering to others' needs tried to forget in part his own; yet, underneath the calm exterior, was a smouldering volcano which threatened to break forth as he realized more and more his great loss. Within a year, his father—strong, vigorous man that he seemed—was suddenly stricken down, and in a few weeks after he was summoned to his bedside he too

was carried out from his home and laid in the little English churchyard.

Then Roger accompanied his mother to the south of France, hoping that in that land of sunshine and flowers she might regain her failing strength. The shock of her husband's death, sudden as it was, to a constitution naturally delicate, was too great, and she gradually faded until, in the gloaming of a beautiful September day, she calmly folded her hands upon her breast, bade him good-bye, and with a bright smile upon her face, passed across the boundary between this world and the next.

Roger, when he had seen her laid beside her husband, rained kisses on his little Mollie's face, and with a terrible sense of loss and pain, gave her into the keeping of her mother's family, and hurried away from England, which to him was now but a land of graves. Through Italy, Greece, Egypt and India he wandered, seeking forgetfulness, and in India, at Calcutta, received the message which had brought him to America. Death still pursued him like relentless fate. John Varholm, his mother's brother, whose heir he was, had died, and his affairs demanded immediate attention. This was the substance of the despatch handed him at his hotel, whither it had followed him. He might as well be in America as elsewhere, and started by the first steamer; but the telegram had been long in finding him, and John Varholm had lain many weeks in the old family vault before he reached the town

where his journey ended. No wonder that now, as he stood at the gate of the old homestead, he paused and drew his hat well down over his eyes, while a flood of memories swept over him.

He was a stranger in the land of his birth! His father's brother had never married; he had been killed by a fall in his own warehouse soon after his nephew's graduation from college. His mother's brother, the last of her family, who had lived all his life in the house yonder, had spent some weeks and months in his father's home, and Roger had many pleasant memories of the kindly, genial man who had taken him into his heart and made him heir to all his large estate. But he had not been in Barham since his childhood, and could not remember the appearance of the old place. His college acquaintances he had seldom met; occasionally some one of them had sought him out, received a cordial welcome, and passed on, but there had been no intimacies. He gave way to his emotions for a few moments, then resolutely turned and took a survey of the house and grounds.

A broad driveway shaded by elms and maples led up to a long, low, rambling stone house, across whose front ran a wide piazza, its roof supported by large fluted stone columns, around which were vines, and against which leaned rose-bushes now in full bloom. From one of its low stone chimneys a faint blue line of smoke sailed off to the west, and following it with his eyes Roger caught glimpses of grassy fields, cultivated

lands, and hillsides dotted with sleek-looking cattle; between the house and the road, from which it was separated by a granite wall, was a lawn, in the center of which was a fountain, throwing up its silver spray over the shoulders of a marble naiad.

Having acquainted himself with the outward appearance of the place, he picked up his overcoat and was reaching for his traveling bag, when he suddenly straightened up, bent his head and listened, while he eagerly scanned the distance before him, then, dropping the coat, leaped to the side of the road, prepared for immediate action.

CHAPTER II.

STRAIGHT toward him, in the opposite direction to that which he had come, came a horse and rider. The horse, a handsome creature, was flying like the wind, while its rider, a woman, powerless to control, clung to the reins. Her pallid face, out of which looked wide, despairing eyes, seemed cut in marble, so stiff and rigid was every muscle.

In a second the stranger realized her peril and his own should he fail in the effort he meant to make to stop the flight of the maddened animal. He set his teeth with grim determination and tossed his hat behind him, measuring with his eye the course the horse would probably take if he swerved, and sprang at his throat. He did not fail, though dragged to his knees, for in spite of his plunges the animal was forced to recognize its master. Holding fast to the bridle, Roger realized that the woman was slipping from her saddle, and releasing one hand he succeeded in breaking her fall, though he could not prevent it.

Leading the horse inside the gate, he tied him to a tree; then gathering her slight form in his arms, he carried her inside the grounds and laid her on the greensward. She had fainted, but he believed she was not injured, and taking from his traveling bag a silver drinking cup, filled it

with water at the fountain and dashed it full in her face. The cool water and a few drops from a pocket flask, which he forced between her lips, revived her. She opened her eyes slowly, with a look of bewilderment, then closed them again for an instant, as full recollection swept over her, while her rescuer hastened to assure her that all danger was over.

"How can I thank you, sir?" she said, as she struggled to a sitting position, and her sweet, low tones had in them a musical cadence pleasant to hear. "It was the dancing bear this side of the mill village. Tico came upon him suddenly and was naturally frightened, but I should have managed him, I am sure, if it had not been for the girl with the tambourine; she began to shake it close to his head, and, I think, meant to frighten him because I did not stop when the man motioned me to give him money. Tico reared upon his hind feet, but did not shake me off, for I was quite prepared; but when he dropped upon his fore feet, he sprang past the bear, and maddened by the noise broke into a run. Somehow he had nearly succeeded in getting the bit between his teeth, so that I could not have held on much longer. If it had not been for you," and the tears glistened in her eyes, "I think I must have been dashed to death. I thank you for my life."

"Thank God that I was here!" said Roger reverently, "and had the strength to aid you,"—and seeing her lips still quiver he went on in a

lighter tone to give her a chance to recover her self-possession.

"Are dancing bears and girls with tambourines a part of the street life in America? I have seen them frequently in the villages among the Pyrenees, but I did not expect to meet them in the outskirts of a large town like this. This one, at least, should be promptly banished before he has time to do any more mischief. Another might not escape so easily as you have. Your horse must be very gentle under ordinary circumstances, or he would not have yielded so readily after he was stopped. See, he stands remarkably quiet, and gives little evidence of his mad freak!"—and, going up to him the young man patted his neck.

"Tico and I are very good friends," and she spoke to the horse in low, soothing tones. "We generally understand each other perfectly. I have driven him and ridden him for three years and this is his first attempt to run with me. I do not blame him now, for his provocation was great." As if he understood her apology for him and was grateful for it, the noble creature laid his head against her arm and looked up into her face with that appealing look one sometimes sees in the eyes of dumb animals. She untied the bridle as she finished, and turning to the man beside her, said brightly:

"We are already very much your debtors, Tico and I, but if you will do us one more service and help me to mount, we will hurry home

before mamma has time to be worried by our long absence."

Roger placed her firmly in the saddle, but when she would have turned away after thanking him once more, he still remained beside her, his hand on her bridle.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said respectfully, "but I must insist upon your accepting my escort, for a part of the way at least. Your horse, though responsive and obedient to your touch, is still nervous. It cannot be otherwise, and it would require but little provocation to make him run again. It is to satisfy my conscience," he said with a smile, looking frankly into her face, which showed a trace of annoyance.

When they had nearly reached the town, Roger paused, looked carefully at the animal, which seemed to have entirely recovered from its fright, and advising its mistress to keep a tight rein and a steady gait, bade her a pleasant good morning, lifted his hat, and was turning away, when she wheeled her horse directly across his path, and held out her hand impulsively.

"Pardon my pettishness! and may I not know to whom I am indebted for my safety? My father, Edmund Lee, will be pleased to call if you remain in town, and may perhaps be of service to you."

She forgot what she had mentally called his officiousness, forgot her pique, as she glanced at the card the stranger handed to her, while her

eyes grew brighter, and that wonderful smile which charmed strangers and friends alike flashed across her face as she again held out her hand.

"Permit me to be the first to welcome Dr. Ahlstrom to Barham! We have been expecting you for some time, and my father, who, as you may know, is one of the owners of the Denwold Mills, will be very glad to know of your arrival. He has heard nothing from or of you since your cablegram to Mr. Dale, and has been anxiously waiting for some further communication. I am Elsie Lee, and your uncle was my dear godfather. I can quite forgive Tico, since he has given me this opportunity of meeting you. Mrs. Hardman, the housekeeper at Elmcroft, at whose hospitable gate you rescued me, has been looking for you also, and you can find no pleasanter home than that which awaits you with her, except, of course, your own—" Then, seeing the dark shadow which crept over her companion's face, she hastened to add, "when the sadness we all feel for the loss of one so dear as its old master has become softened by time."

With a few simple words of thanks for her kindly welcome, Dr. Ahlstrom again bade her good morning and retraced his steps, thinking over the adventure and wondering in what way it would affect his life in Barham. It had done one thing for him already; it had brought him in contact with his kind, and shown him that he had not lost all interest in the world about him.

When he reached the gates of Elmcroft a second time he set his face resolutely forward, and walking boldly up the avenue to the front door, which stood half open, he reached out, grasped the old-fashioned knocker in his hand and let it fall against the lion's head with a clang that resounded through the house.

An elderly lady, with a sweet, motherly face framed in bands of snow-white hair, was just entering the hall, and answered his summons. The first glance which she gave the stranger changed instantly as she stretched out both hands impulsively, drew him closer to herself and touched his bared forehead with her lips.

"I cannot be mistaken, Dr. Ahlstrom! You have your mother's eyes and smile, and you will pardon an old woman's greeting of the son of a dearly loved friend," she said, as she led him into the pleasant sitting-room and gave him a chair beside a vine-draped window. "It has been so long since we have heard from you, that I began to fear you had changed your mind and would not come to us after all. I should have been sadly disappointed."

For years this kindly gentlewoman had lived in this house and made it pleasant and home-like for the man who was almost alone in the world, with no other kin than his sister's family, of whom this young man was now the only representative.

Roger was very quiet. Here, in his mother's childhood home, it all came back again, the pain,

the weariness and loneliness of life for him. Gradually, however, Mrs. Hardman's gentle words and motherly tenderness, as she chatted with him of his long journey and the pleasant summer weather, leaving him to listen and to answer as little as he would, soothed and comforted him; and presently she told him what she knew he was waiting to hear—of his uncle's sudden death. "The doctors, who were hastily summoned, called it heart disease. What else could they call it, for surely the heart had ceased to beat?"

Mr. Varholm had seemed as usual that morning, and had stood at the window with her for some time, pointing out some improvements he meant to make about the grounds when the weather became warmer, and then, getting impatient at Patrick's delay in bringing the buggy to the door, he bade her good morning, and drawing on his gloves walked toward the stable. At the head of the avenue he met the man, and getting into the carriage took the reins into his own hands—he seldom allowed any one to drive for him—and drove directly to the office at the mills, talking on the way with the good-natured Irishman, who had been in his employ for several years.

He greeted Dexter, his bookkeeper, and Lawrence, the clerk, with a cheery good morning, and seated himself at his desk to look over the morning's mail. He gave Dexter some directions a little later, talked with him a few moments in

regard to them, answered the questions of one of the foremen who wished some information, and sent Lawrence on an errand. Then, for a time, Dexter heard the steady scratch, scratch of his pen, as it flew over the paper. After a while he missed the sound, but kept steadily on with his own work, for it was nearing pay day and he was very busy. Wishing to ask a question about an account, he spoke without turning, and receiving no answer repeated the question with the same result; then, turning his head, he saw that his employer still sat with his back to him, his head dropped on his breast. Noticing nothing unusual to alarm him, he concluded that Mr. Varholm was preoccupied with his own thoughts, and, checking the account for future reference, made no further attempt to arouse him. A half-hour or more after, Lawrence came back and found him still seated at his desk, looking down with eyes that saw beyond time into eternity.

They brought him home, and three days later bore him out through the door through which he had so often passed, for the last time. In the sunshine of a bright March day they laid him in the Varholm family lot, on a sunny slope in the old cemetery, beside his wife and the two daughters for whom he had never ceased to mourn. A long procession followed him to this last resting place, for the kindness and friendliness of the man had won the affection of his employees and the good will of his townsmen,

who had relied upon him in many ways, trusting him implicitly, and now felt the loss not only of a friend and neighbor, but of a helper and counselor as well.

Lawyer Dale, who had been his friend and legal adviser for many years, took charge of his papers, and among them found a letter addressed to his nephew. It was sealed, ready for mailing, and appeared to have been written either the night before or the morning of his death, and had probably been brushed aside and so overlooked when he gathered the letters from the desk in the library to send to the post-office. They did not try to send it, for after that first cablegram to England had found him a wanderer they did not know where to direct it with any certainty of its reaching him; and Mr. Dale had confined his efforts to sending a simple statement of Mr. Varholm's death, with a request for him to come at once to America, to the two ports which had been given as definite points which he had intended to make some time during his absence. The lawyer gave her the letter and she laid it between the leaves of the old family Bible and placed the latter in the room she had made ready for him.

Once alone in this room, Dr. Ahlstrom turned the pages of the well-worn book and found the letter; then he sat holding it in his hand, half fearing to break the seal. It came to him, so it seemed, like a message from the unseen world, and his face paled to the lips. Had his uncle

looked across the threshold into that world to which he was so soon to journey, and, feeling that the end was near, left him a last farewell? He was not superstitious, he said to himself again and again, and he had faced death too many times to fear its terrors; he would welcome it gladly if the death angel came for him. But this letter, written by a hand that had been cold and nerveless for months, had a curious effect upon him. Gathering courage, he broke the seal, and with fingers far from steady, withdrew the closely written sheets and tried to read. It bore the date of the evening preceding his death:

"My Dear Roger" (it began):

"I am, as the lawyers say, in sound health of mind and body, but I feel an unaccountable oppression this evening, a foreboding of some impending trouble which I cannot shake off, and when one is seventy, Roger, such a feeling sets him thinking.

"There is much I wish and must say to you some time. I know something of the waves of sorrow that have swept over you—I breasted them long ago. But courage; you have years of life before you, while I am standing on the outmost verge, waiting for the summons which shall reunite me to those whom I loved as passionately as you loved yours. When you have worn off the first bitterness (as perhaps is best) alone, come to me and let me try to help and comfort you. We will help each other. But if, before you come, anything happens to me, remember that you are my heir, and that all my business will fall into your hands.

"Elmcroft and one-half the Denwold mill property—my whole interest—are yours absolutely; and there are bonds in Hookset bank and real estate in Barham, which, after my debts and a few legacies are paid, are yours also. Robert

Dale, my lawyer, will tell you about everything. He has known my business affairs for years, knows of my interest in you, and has my will and all legal papers belonging to my estate in his possession, and will assist and advise you as I would. He is not a man of enthusiasms, and may seem to you cold and slow in words and manner, but he is as true as truth itself, the soul of honor and justice. You may trust him without fear.

"I foresee that, in case of accident to me, Edmund Lee will assume control of the mills, which would be perfectly right and proper, as he is the next heaviest owner, and the only one living in town; but you must learn the business as soon as possible and take the management yourself, or at least look after it, if they are to succeed in the future as they have in the past. Colonel Lee has been my life-long friend, but he is harsh and implacable, as inexorable as Shylock, and is without that natural gift which makes a man capable of ordering his fellow-men, so that there can be but one result if he takes charge of the business. I have seen that to-day as never before.

"You will find an able assistant in dealing with the operatives in his daughter, who is my god-daughter and very dear to me. She has been with me to the village more or less from childhood, and the mill people know and love her, and seek her assistance in every emergency among the women and children. God bless the child! If only you could forget some time! for—pardon an old man's foolish fancy, Roger—I do sometimes think what this old house might be with you and Elsie in it. I fear I have said too much, but the wish that you were here grows stronger and stronger every day.

"Good night; and may God give you peace and comfort, my boy.

"JOHN VARHOLM."

Roger bowed his head on his hand when he had finished reading the letter. Sitting there he could realize as never before how deep had been

the grief, and yet how strong and resolute had been the will of this man who, seeing his cherished hopes fade away, had sought in the natural kindness of his heart to find contentment in helping others. He felt the tender sympathy which had reached out to him in his trouble, the compassionate love which would have drawn him into that yearning, manly heart, and grew stronger for the life before him; and when he raised his head there was a light in his eyes, a strength of purpose in the firmly-closed lips, which showed that he had made a resolution and would abide by it. The work which had been dropped so suddenly he would take up and make his own, for a time, at least. He could not give up his profession for all time, but he would leave it until he could think of some plan which he felt sure his uncle would approve, and which would ensure the success of the mills.

Then his thoughts went back to the incident of the morning when Elsie Lee's bright, piquant face rested against his knee. He recalled the smile which made it beautiful as she thanked him for her life, and the silvery sweetness of her voice—a rare thing in the women of his acquaintance—as she so shyly proffered her friendship.

The sound of the dinner bell aroused him from his musings.

CHAPTER III.

AS he seated himself at the table, Dr. Ahlstrom glanced around. It was a large, square room, fitted up with an old-time elegance of heavy mahogany and handsome draperies, which he vaguely remembered, and reminded him now of an English country house. Opposite to him was the old-fashioned fireplace, set around with English tiles, and above the mantel hung a full-size portrait of his uncle. The artist had been particularly fortunate, and had caught the expression he remembered best, and the afternoon sun threw over it a glow which made it seem as if ready to speak the welcome the eyes so surely looked.

The table was faultless in all its appointments, and Mrs. Hardman, in her dress of soft gray silk and dainty lace, was quite in keeping with the place. Her quiet manner and the tact she knew so well how to use, drew him out of his abstraction, and he found himself talking as easily and naturally as if they two had always been the best of friends, instead of the merest strangers only a few hours before.

She told him of the town, its rapid growth, and something of the people who she thought might interest him, for Barham had been the home of her childhood and young womanhood, and she knew all the old families, so that when

she came back after her husband's death, it had been simply a coming home. The young man's mother had been her chosen friend, and she had only pleasant memories of their girlhood together, which she was glad to share with the son who so vividly recalled the past to her. Louise Varholm was her bridesmaid when she plighted her vows to the young Southerner, her brother's college friend, who won her heart and took her away to grace his home and be mistress over scores of slaves; and when, two years later, Louise had added Ahlstrom to her name, she and her husband spent some delightful weeks in "Old Car'lina" on the Hardman plantation, "Kincardine."

Ah, but Kincardine was a charming home! Roger remembered how his mother used to speak of it and of its mistress, the belle of the county. What lavish entertainments were given in its spacious rooms! What hosts of distinguished men and women had been its guests! Those were good old times, and never a slave on that great plantation but would have given himself for Massa and little Mistis, as they called her, in the days before the war.

Israel Hardman, in spite of his generous, manly spirit, which would tolerate no cruelty and no injustice toward those whom he believed to be, by divine right, under his protection, and who looked with contempt on the Legrees and others of his stamp, was southern born and bred, and believed implicitly in slavery and its institutions; and, so believing, was one of the first to raise

a regiment and go to the front when the legislature, of which he was a member, decided by a unanimous vote to go out of the Union—though, to his credit be it said, he was anxious to reconcile differences, if possible, before resorting to that extreme measure.

In her home his young wife watched and waited. Her sympathies were with the people among whom she had been reared, but she loved her husband with a devotion of which he was altogether worthy, and even had she had an opportunity, would never have deserted him and his interests. With energy of purpose and an unbending will she managed the affairs of the plantation and was reckoned a staunch friend of the "cause" in which her husband had enlisted, so that her home and her rights were rigidly respected. Only Israel Hardman guessed her real sentiments, and he kept his suspicions securely locked in his own breast, well knowing to what annoyance and danger she would be subjected if they became known. She neither avowed nor denied them, for no one questioned her. Whenever a soldier, footsore and weary or wounded or sick, came her way she offered him a chance to rest and bound up his wounds. With old Cæsar on the box and her maid beside her, she often drove to the city hospital and with her own white hands distributed the dainties prepared on the plantation.

When a Yankee prison was established she innocently demanded the right to minister to their sick and wounded, presenting herself to the

guard, who knew her by name and reputation; and her quiet dignity and her rejoinder to his rebuff, as she replied that they were men, and that, if her husband were captured—and the tears rolled down her cheeks—she hoped the Yankees would not torture him, but treat him as well as they did their dogs, made the officer wince, and he told her respectfully that if she could get a permit from General C——, he would see that she was allowed to follow the wishes of her generous heart, but he must obey orders, and these would not allow her to enter.

She knew General C——well. He was her husband's friend, and never for a moment doubted the loyalty of his friend's wife. It was against the advice of the more hot-headed to allow any mitigation of the sufferings of the Yankee prisoners, and he feared that compliance with her request would arouse whisperings and discontent in the city and in the camp and place her under suspicion; but her plea for suffering humanity was so strong and so ingenuous that she was finally given the coveted permission, and was very fortunate in escaping the ill will of the soldiers in the Rebel camp; for if one did, now and then, curse her womanish softness and mutter about her northern birth, there were scores of others who silenced him, pointing to her merciful deeds among their own, which were now redoubled. Even old Cæsar was deceived, and down at the quarters bemoaned Mistis' lack of sympathy for "de Norf and Massa Linkum;"

but nevertheless he was loyal to her, and not only he, but all the negroes, who spoke often of "Massa Kunnel," who looked so grand in his "rigimintles" that morning when he rode away, after telling them to take good care of Mistis and she would take good care of them.

They knew that without the telling, for from the first hour, when the young wife entered the great hall of the mansion where the house servants were waiting to receive her, their new mistress, she had been to them all a blessing. The field hands learned to worship her as a sort of saint, and gladly responded to her pleasant greetings as she rode down from time to time with her husband or hastened to their aid in time of distress and need.

She received frequent visits from the officers stationed in the city, who came out to the plantation to bring messages from her husband's regiment, which was in Virginia in the thick of the fray, or to tell her how the "cause" was gaining or was losing in the Southwest, and lounge for an hour on her wide veranda, forgetting for that brief time the stern realities of war. So, when one morning word was brought to her down at the quarters, whither she had gone to look after the comfort of John's Julie, who had presented him with a little pickanniny in the night, that a squad of cavalry had ridden up to the house and were stabling their horses and clamoring for something to eat, she need not have been disturbed; but old Pomp', who

brought the news, looked at her with eyes full of wonder and fear as he saw her face grow colorless, and caught her in his arms as she swayed backward.

"Fawh God's sake, what am it, mistis? What hab hurt yo'?"

She realized her danger in a moment, and laughed nervously as she released herself from his supporting arms.

"Don't be frightened, Pomp'. I just scratched my finger; see?" and she held up one finger, which bore a long, deep scratch. "Don't tell anybody that I was foolish enough to almost faint at a little thing like that." And she went up to the house.

She found half a dozen men lounging on the steps and about the lawn, and forcing a smile to her lips she went forward to meet them.

They were all strangers, but apparently gentlemen, for the spokesman advanced, hat in hand, while the others stood respectfully at one side, evidently impressed by the grace and dignity of the beautiful woman before them.

"I beg your pardon, madam, for this intrusion. I am Capt. Barrie of the Georgia —th, and my men and I, who were out last night, are tired and hungry, and—"

She did not wait for him to finish. "I am glad you came up to the house," she said. "My servant tells me your horses are in the stable, and if you will excuse me I will give the necessary orders for your breakfast; in the meantime please make yourselves comfortable," and with a

graceful bow to the officer she hurried away through the hall, while the men stretched themselves in the shade, on the grass, thankful for this rest after their night of hard riding.

If they could only have seen their hospitable hostess when, once out of their sight, she hurried up the stairs to the long, low attic room under the roof, and unbolting the door opened it and looked in. In one corner crouched a man holding a revolver tightly clasped in each hand. He had seen the soldiers as they rode up and never doubted that they were his pursuers; but he resolved to sell his life dearly, and waited, expecting to hear the ring of spurs on the stairs every moment.

"Don't be frightened, there is no danger yet!" she whispered hurriedly. "They do not suspect your presence, and not one of the servants knows you are here, and while I do not believe they intend making any search, you had better, for a while at least, get in here." And she opened the door of a small closet, which was so exactly fitted into the woodwork as to easily escape the notice of anyone unacquainted with the secret. "If you hear anyone coming, you can close the door, but be sure that you do it carefully, so that the edges meet exactly," and she hurried away, bolting the attic door from the outside as before.

As she was sitting on the veranda, just after dusk, the evening before, looking idly down the avenue, wishing that she might receive some message from her husband, from whom she had

not heard directly for some weeks, and feeling worried and anxious, knowing that a serious encounter had taken place between a part of the division to which his regiment belonged and the enemy, she thought she heard a noise which sounded like a sneeze from the other side of the hedge that separated the lawn from a grassy field. She had taught herself to be as nearly fearless as possible, and now she rose from her chair and looked around. The men were at the stables or down at the quarters, and Colburn, the overseer, had ridden over to an adjoining plantation to discuss the situation and some matters of interest which concerned Kincardine.

Mrs. Hardman's first impulse was to call one of the housemaids, but on second thought she moved down the steps and walked slowly and deliberately across the lawn and peered through an opening. She thought she saw a man sitting there, though it might be an animal (it was too dark to be positive); but whatever it was it had not seen or heard her, evidently, for her voice startled it. It was a man's voice that spoke—

"For God's sake do not betray me. If you do I am lost!" The voice was low and strained, but it struck a chord in her heart and set it vibrating strangely.

"Who are you?"

"A man hunted for his life by these cursed Reb——" He realized his mistake and did not finish.

"Give me up!" and he spoke hurriedly. "I don't know what to do next, but I will never be taken alive!" and she heard the click of a revolver.

"I will help you."

"You!" and the tone of that one word was eloquent with a surprise she did not fail to understand, but she answered quietly:

"Yes, you need not fear to trust me. Go down beside the hedge until you come to a narrow gate; wait there until I come."

The night was so dark and the shadows so deep that the man felt quite secure from observation, but he distrusted this woman and held fast his revolver, cocked for immediate use, though he did as she bade him, for, save for his revolver, he knew that he was absolutely at her mercy.

Mrs. Hardman walked leisurely back to the house, stood for a moment at the door listening, then passed through the long hall. She could hear Suly groaning with a misery in her back, and Mammy and Beede trying to help her, and feeling sure that for a few moments at least she was safe from interruption she hurried back to the hedge. She found the man waiting impatiently for her, and bade him come through the gate.

"Don't speak," she said, "but take off your shoes, creep up opposite the house, and when you see the light turned down come quickly to the steps."

Again she hastened back. It was still quiet, and turning down the light she looked across, but the soldier was beside her before she saw him. She turned with a start, and grasping his coat sleeve led him to the second floor, where a light was dimly burning in the gallery. She hurriedly caught it up and held it near his face. The two stood staring at each other, too much surprised to speak. The man found his voice first, and caught the candle which was slipping from her fingers.

"Catharine Hardman!"

"Marcus Varholm!"

"You will not betray me, Catharine, though to take me in is to endanger your life as well as my own? I am a spy! A *spy*, Catharine! You had better let me go and leave me to my fate!"

"Hush! Hush! you are safe for a few hours, at least. I am alone in the house, except for the servants, and they have not seen you. I am too good a Southerner to be suspected of disloyalty; but come," and opening a baize door she disclosed a staircase leading to the attic. Back of the larger rooms in the front of this story was a long, low, unfurnished room used for storage and as a receptacle for the many things which often fall into disuse. This room was fastened on the outside, and she now unbolted the door and bade him enter, promising to bring him food as soon as she could, and leaving him, bolting the door, she hurried down stairs.

It had really taken but a few moments, though it seemed hours to the anxious woman, to conduct her guest to this place of refuge, and she had not been missed. When Colburn came back, a little later, she still sat in the hall, rocking to and fro, singing softly a hymn that had been a favorite with her husband and herself.

Colburn had a good deal to say about the spy who had so cunningly escaped from his captors and had so successfully eluded their most careful search, but who, it was believed, would be captured before morning, and advised Mrs. Hardman to keep a sharp lookout for all stragglers. She showed a keen interest in his story, questioning him now and then, but she betrayed no emotion or agitation, and the overseer never for a single moment suspected that she knew aught more than he had told her, or that she was not as eager as himself to hand the Yankee over to his pursuers.

Catharine Hardman realized that she was playing a dangerous, if not desperate part, and knew that it would tax all her powers of dissimulation to the utmost, but she meant to win, and never doubting herself, was easy and natural, though there were moments when she was fairly surprised at herself, and wondered what spirit possessed her.

When the house was closed for the night she went to her room, allowed Mammy to undress her as usual and see her safe in bed, after which, as was her custom, the woman passed into the

little dressing room and was soon fast asleep. When her mistress was sure, by the sound of her regular breathing, that there was nothing to fear from her for a time, she rose from her bed, threw over her night robe a dressing gown, drew on her stockings, softly opened the door and listened. Colburn slept some distance from the staircase, and she did not fear him, but Mammy was a light sleeper and might awaken at the least noise, and if she should miss her would arouse the house.

It was slow, tedious work to get down to the pantry, secure food, and get back up stairs; but at last she accomplished it, and withdrawing the bolt stood once more in the presence of the man who was once her friend, and was now her prisoner with a price on his head.

She gave him the food she had brought, though she dared stay only a few brief moments; but she learned that he was indeed a spy, as he had said, and had come down to the place to get plans of the fortifications; he had been successful and had them safe, and, if it had not been for an accident, he would have got away unsuspected. He told her that her brother had been for more than a year in the army and was then in Sherman's command, having just returned to duty after a furlough necessitated by a severe wound, which it was feared at one time would prove fatal. Then she went away and was fortunate enough to get back to her room and to bed without disturbing any of the household.

After Mrs. Hardman had warned her prisoner

and reassured him, she hurried down stairs and gave orders to the servants to hasten their preparations for the breakfast, entering into details with Betts and Chloe, who were as anxious as their mistress, though for a very different reason, to get rid of the gray coats as soon as possible; and no one seeing her, certainly not Captain Barrie and his men of the Georgia —th, had any suspicion of the anxiety and fear hidden under her studied calm.

She proved herself to be a consummate actress and never betrayed a glimmer of satisfaction as, after their meal was finished, the captain admonished his men to hasten their movements; but her heart nearly jumped into her throat, and she never could tell how she got through the ordeal when, after his men were mounted, he thanked her for her courtesy, and asked her to keep a sharp lookout for a Yankee spy who had escaped from the soldiers who were taking him into camp, and proceeded to describe the man in the attic with almost photographic minuteness. She saw them ride away down the avenue with a feeling of relief, and then hurried to her room, where for a few moments at least she could throw off the terrible strain of the last hour. But all that had passed was mere child's play to that which was before her. She dared not keep Lieutenant Varholm in the house another night, even if he had been willing to remain.

Calling John, one of her most trusty servants, she sent him on an errand to a plantation at some distance, knowing that the negro, who

was shrewd and cautious, would keep his eyes and ears open, and that, knowing of the escape of the spy, he would be interested to collect all the information possible and would report all that he heard to old Cæsar.

The wisdom of her course was apparent when he returned, and told the latter that he met some soldiers who questioned him closely, trying to find out if he had seen the Yank, who, they said, had been skulking in the woods some miles below, where they were going to beat him up. John heard them say they wanted to let the dogs loose, but they couldn't put them on the scent. Mrs. Hardman shuddered when Cæsar told her that; she knew too well what it meant. Taking the man into her confidence she arranged a plan and waited to see if she could carry it out.

If the woods, which extended for miles below the plantation, were full of soldiers, it would be useless to attempt to escape through them. There was only one way open that offered even a chance of success. About half a mile back of the mansion ran a creek, a branch of the river which emptied into the sea. For a part of its way this creek skirted a large wooded swamp, which was almost inaccessible to any one acquainted with its dangers, and to a stranger who found himself in its depths it would prove an almost certain grave. There was one man who knew every inch of it thoroughly. Bill Tucker, a free negro, had, years before the war,

frequented the place to procure the peculiar fibre of a tree or large shrub which he was accustomed to weave into an odd kind of basket, and to plait into mats that were neat and serviceable, which the planters' wives readily bought, so that Bill made money enough to keep himself, and even felt above the "clay-eaters" and the "tackies" of the pine barrens; but after the first year of the struggle money became scarcer and scarcer, and Bill found that, except occasionally, his mats and baskets could not be disposed of in the old way, though he frequently bartered them for food.

Mrs. Hardman had always treated the negro kindly, and had instructed her servants to give him food whenever he asked for it, and there was scarcely a week that she did not hear Chloe or Betts speak of his having been at the cook-house. Now, in her extremity, her thoughts turned to him as the only human being who could aid her. She knew from Cæsar that Bill was a staunch Unionist, and that he had so far contrived to escape molestation; yet she was almost afraid to place any hopes on his continued security from apprehension, shrewd as she knew him to be; but it was the only chance that offered even a possibility of success, in the only plan that presented itself to her mind, and she directed Cæsar to keep a lookout for him.

Whether the reader believes in the special interposition of Divine Providence or not, Catharine Hardman does, and has so believed since

that day, and no argument can ever destroy that belief. She will tell you that this one incident in her life has proved it beyond a doubt.

About five o'clock that afternoon, as she sat on the veranda trying to sew, her heart heavy with its misgivings lest Bill Tucker might not be found, she nearly started from her chair as she saw him slowly swinging up the avenue, a couple of mats and a basket in his hand. He came up to the steps, and pulling at his ragged hat, shuffled from one foot to the other, then spread out his mats before her. Glancing around to see that no one was in hearing, she bent down as if to examine them, and hurriedly told her story. Bill was all attention and rolled up the whites of his eyes with a look of intelligence as she finished.

"Yo've been good to me, Mistis, an' I lubs de Norf an' Massa Linkum, an' I ken do it shore ef nobody comes afore we gits off; but it's def to bof of us ef we gits caught."

In a few words the negro told her what her part in his plan for the escape of her prisoner would be, and leaving her, went around the house to leave the basket which she bought with Chloe; then he skulked along down to the cabins and found Cæsar, to whom he gave a few necessary directions.

Putting up a box of food which with economy in use would last two or three days, Mrs. Hardman succeeded in getting this and her prisoner safely out of the house a little before midnight,

and delivering both to Cæsar went back to her room, where she watched and waited in an agony of fear till morning. All Cæsar could tell her, when he came up to the house as usual in the morning, was that Bill had taken the man away in the old flat-bottomed scow he used for fishing.

For days and days she waited, trembling inwardly at every sound; but at last she heard the curses, deep and loud, as she rode down to camp one day, of the "d—d Yankee spy," who had outwitted them and made good his escape. Some time after she learned from Cæsar, whom Bill had told, that he took the Yank to a little hut in the swamp and kept him there several days, while he kept around, showing himself to the soldiers every day, to throw them off their guard if they chanced to have any suspicions of him; then, when he felt safe, with the help of a friend, the spy was piloted to the home of a white man whose sympathies, though outwardly with his neighbors, were really with the government, who saw him safely to the mountains.

With this Mrs. Hardman had to be content, for she heard nothing more from Lieutenant Varholm until after the close of the war. She had exacted from him a promise that he would not reveal his meeting with her or the part she had taken in his escape to even his nearest friends till the war was ended, telling him that when that happy time came they could talk it over in safety, and she might, meantime, still be of service to some other wayfarer.

Marcus Varholm kept his word, and not even to her brother did he speak of her until after both had been mustered out of the service and the stars and stripes floated once more from Maine to Mexico and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, when both came back to Barham; then, one day, seated in the pleasant library at Elm-croft, he told the story of that secret expedition, which but for Catharine's nerve and daring had cost him his life.

Colonel was General Hardman when the war ended, but he came back a physical wreck of the strong, stalwart man who rode away so proudly at the head of his regiment four years before;—came back to find his wife still in his home, but that home, like himself, was also a wreck. He had sowed the wind and was reaping the whirlwind.

For a few years he lingered, and Catharine's energy and perseverance helped maintain them in comparative comfort. Mammy, old Cæsar, and one or two more of the older slaves, still remained on the plantation, but the others, though blessing the mistress who had always treated them kindly, had long ago departed. Perhaps, if Israel Hardman had been given health and strength, he might have retrieved in part his shattered fortunes; but privation and disappointment had done their work, and he died in Catharine's arms, an unrepentant, unreconstructed Rebel, but believing in his wife as strongly as the Catholic believes in his patron

saint; and when he was laid beside his kindred in the beautiful little family burying-ground, Catharine still remained in the old mansion at Kincardine for five years longer, feeling that she could not leave him there and those who still depended on her. But Mammy and old Cæsar, too, at last were gone, and gathering up the remnant of that once large fortune, she came back to Barham; and when John Varholm was left alone he urged her to come to Elmcroft as his housekeeper and friend, and help make it comfortable and still home-like, if possible, for the brother of the woman who had been and then was her dearest friend.

CHAPTER IV.

After dinner Dr. Ahlstrom drove down to the lawyer's office with Patrick, his uncle's man. He felt that he wished to get over the formalities incident to his coming as soon as possible.

Mr. Dale was very cordial and friendly in his welcome, expressed his pleasure at seeing the nephew of his old friend, and congratulated him on his accession to so fine a property, ending with the hope that he would find Barham so pleasant that he would decide to make it a permanent home.

The will which he had drawn up for Mr. Varholm was in his safe, as were all of the legal papers connected with the estate, and had not yet been read; though in accordance with its provisions he had, as executor, taken charge of everything except the management of the mills, which had been assumed by Colonel Lee, one of the partners, who lived in town. He thought, as all the legatees of the will lived in this or the adjoining town, it would be possible to call a meeting at his office for the next morning, and took it upon himself to notify each one personally, that there might be no mistake. He was anxious himself to get matters ready for a settlement, and had been impatient at the long delay.

When they were driving home, Patrick, who had promised to deliver a message for Mrs. Hard-

man, drove off the main street on to another which was lined on either side with fine large shade-trees, back of which were some of the finest residences in the town, each standing in the midst of beautiful gardens or lawns; and seeing his companion's interest, gave him the names of their owners and such other information as he could regarding them.

In the wide porch of one of the most attractive of these houses Roger discovered the heroine of his morning's adventure, reading a newspaper. She raised her eyes at the sound of wheels, and recognizing the occupants of the Elmcroft carriage, answered the bows of the two men with a graceful inclination of her head. Patrick, who of course knew nothing of the incident of the runaway, took the bow wholly to himself.

"She's a pretty thing, is Miss Elsie," he said, as he replaced his head covering; "not a bit like the old Colonel—bad luck to him!" he added in an undertone; "an' the master an' Mis' Hardman that fond of her an' always a-wanting her at Elmcroft. Did yez moind how foine and polite she bowed? She's allers that way, sir"—and he almost forgot his errand in descanting on that young lady's perfections.

It was not strange that Roger should dream that night of a bright face, which seemed to be his Mary's, close beside him; but when he tried to clasp her in his arms she always eluded him, and Elsie Lee's blue eyes met his instead, and he heard his uncle's voice saying, "I sometimes seem to see you in this home, you and Elsie!"

The following morning, at the hour appointed, Dr. Ahlstrom, accompanied by Mrs. Hardman, whose presence had been also requested, drove to the lawyer's office. He found there Colonel Lee, who had been out of town the previous day, but who now hastened to greet and welcome him to Barham, and to thank him for the great assistance he had rendered his daughter, who was his idol and of whose narrow escape he could not speak without deep emotion; and Miss Elsie herself, who held out her hand cordially as she bade him a pleasant good morning. Beside these, there were two or three others to whom he was introduced, who were indirectly interested in the will.

Without preamble or hesitation, Mr. Dale took the instrument from his safe and proceeded to read it. It was simple and terse in all its details. Legacies of various amounts, from "ten thousand dollars to my friend and housekeeper, Catharine Lane Hardman, in consideration of her fidelity to my interests and her aid to my brother, Marcus, in his time of greatest need; and I wish, if it can be made agreeable to all interested, that she may always have a home at Elmcroft," to a few hundred dollars to the servants who had been longest in his employ and several bequests to charities which his wife had fostered and to which he had been a generous contributor since her death; "five thousand dollars, in trust, to my dear goddaughter, Elsie, daughter of Colonel Edmund Lee of Barham; and to my nephew, Roger

Varholm Ahlstrom, son of my sister, Louise Varholm, and her husband, Paxford Blake Ahlstrom, all the rest and residue of my estate of whatever nature, after my just debts are paid, to be his absolutely; and I also appoint the said Roger V. Ahlstrom trustee for Elsie Lee. I further request Roger V. Ahlstrom to familiarize himself with the business of the Denwold mills and assume their management in my place."

The will was evidently made soon after the death of the testator's wife, and bore a date some ten years before; but the codicil requesting Roger to take charge of the mills had been added only a few weeks before his death.

On the whole, it was a very satisfactory document to those interested, with one exception. Elsie Lee perhaps wondered why her godfather had made his nephew her trustee, and Roger, who thought he knew his uncle's reason from his letter, wondered how much she had been in the latter's confidence concerning his hopes and wishes, and bit his lips as he looked across at her.

The person disappointed and surprised was Colonel Lee, and he could scarcely disguise a start of annoyance when he heard the reading of the codicil in which the management of the mills was urged upon the young man. He was disposed to resent, even from the dead, what he stigmatized in his own mind as unwarrantable interference with his plans.

He had long wished to have a voice in the actual management of these mills; not that he

was dissatisfied with the handsome dividends paid to him promptly every six months, but because he was a firm believer in Col. Edmund Lee's ability to improve whatever he chose to touch, and because it was his disposition to find fault with what he did not touch. When John Varholm died so suddenly he thought he saw his chance; and in the letter to the New York partners, who held between them one-fourth of the stock, announcing the sad event, he also announced his intention to take upon himself the management of the concern. Receiving, as was natural, since he lived near by, and had moreover the same interest with themselves, their full consent, he intended to carry on the business to his own satisfaction, and never dreamed that there could be any obstacle in his way, for he knew that his friend's heir was a physician by education and from choice, and he did not believe that he would be disposed to take upon himself business cares for which he was, so he said to himself, totally unfitted.

Roger was an acute observer of men, and quickly divined the Colonel's thoughts; but his was a face which could conceal what was passing in his own mind, so that all the other saw was a young man with a pleasant smile and deferential manner toward himself, and he fancied he would not be difficult to manage.

Mr. Dale was anxious to go over the schedule of the property with the Doctor as soon as possible, and the latter having appointed a day which would suit the convenience of both, ex-

changed a few words with the gentlemen who were there in the interests of the charities, assisted Mrs. Hardman to her seat in the Elmcroft carriage, and learning that Colonel Lee was driving, as was his custom, to the mills, suggested going with him, and was invited to occupy the vacant seat in the Lee buggy.

The Denwold mills, as they were called, had been in the Varholm family for more than seventy years. John Varholm's grandfather, in company with a great-uncle of Edmund Lee, bought the original site, upon which was a small woolen mill. By some mismanagement Dixon Lee lost one-half of his share, but the remaining one-fourth had been kept in the family, although John Varholm had several times tried to secure possession of it, especially when he made the changes and added the new buildings; but realizing the present and the prospective value of the property as an investment, both Lee and the other two partners had refused all overtures and acquiesced in all the improvements proposed by Mr. Varholm.

These mills were two in number, and gave employment to about six hundred hands. They were situated in a hollow a little off the main road from Barham to Hinton Four Corners and about a mile and a half from the former town. Each had in front a neat, well-kept lawn through which, now in summer time, wide flower-lined walks led to the main entrances.

The town-people had smiled when John Varholm first ploughed up and grassed over the mill

yard, and when he set out flowering shrubs and plants therein they laughed outright. To try to elevate a set of dirty mill-hands by beautifying their brick workshop where they were employed ten hours out of the twenty-four was such a novel idea that they could not appreciate it, and they unhesitatingly predicted that, before the next Saturday night, every plant would be uprooted and the grass trampled underneath the boot-heels of the operatives; but John Varholm only smiled as he listened when these remarks were repeated in his presence, and kept right on.

But his work did not stop there. The red brick walls of the mills were treated to a judicious application of oil, the doors and window frames painted a grayish brown and sanded, the windows themselves provided with neat curtains which could be raised or lowered at will; and against the walls of the low brick office clinging ivy vines had overgrown and covered all the red, with only door and window openings cut out.

The cottages and the tenement houses were put in repair and the little yards in front enclosed with white paling. A long row of elms and maples, of which the owner was very proud, lined the short street, and when the work of beautifying was complete, Denwold Mill Village was one of the most attractive little villages in the state, if not in the country; and contrary to everybody's prophecy the mill help not only enjoyed its changed appearance, but were so proud of it that they vied with each other in

keeping it in order; and Roger, seeing it now for the first time, exclaimed at its air of thrift and comfort and beauty, so unlike the mill villages of his acquaintance.

In the mills, a tour of which he made with his companion, he found the operatives had a sleek, well-fed look, quite unlike the English operatives of his acquaintance, and when he spoke to the foremen in the different rooms, to whom Colonel Lee introduced him, he was still more surprised at the intelligent, well-worded replies he received. Another thing which surprised him was the absence of small children. Mr. Varholm had frequently said that he kept no nursery, and insisted that the children of his employees should be sent to school the required time prescribed by law. Truant officers never had to threaten to visit Denwold Mills to find their truants, neither had the school commissioner been obliged to issue certificates to the children. A large part of the help, and quite two-thirds of the bosses employed in Mr. Varholm's time, had grown up in Barham and adjoining towns. Dr. Ahlstrom was much pleased with all that he saw and heard, and so expressed himself to the Colonel.

"Yes, I flatter myself it has been a pretty well managed concern, on the whole, and it looks well, a little too well. I think it would have been better if your uncle hadn't been so easy with his help, and had not made so many repairs on the buildings and laid out the grounds. It cost considerable, and of course we get no returns from that outlay. You can see for your-

self a mill yard was never intended to be kept like a gentleman's grounds. It's poor taste, I say, to try to make gentlemen and ladies out of the men and women whose business it is to keep machinery running! It makes them discontented and uneasy, and in time they get insolent. Don't you think so, Doctor?"

But just at that moment Dr. Ahlstrom was busy examining the intricacies of a machine before which they were standing, and Colonel Lee could not see the steely glitter of his eyes, which would have warned him of his listener's lack of sympathy, and he went on:

"I intend to remedy this in part, though of course I can't uproot and dig up the grass and shrubs all at once, it wouldn't be policy; but I shall not waste any money in taking care of them, and I mean to make some alterations and some changes in the help which will reduce expenses. Indeed, I have already begun. They don't like it very well, but that don't make any difference to me. The mills are a business consideration, and we want to get as much money as possible out of them. If the old hands don't want to stay, they've found out, some of 'em, that I'm willing they should go, and that they can always get a bill of their time at the office. I am satisfied there is only one way to deal with them, and that is to let them see that I'm master," he said as they walked along.

"Two or three of the men who had been here for years got it into their heads that I couldn't

get along without 'em, and were impertinent. I told them to go, and the new men are just as good, so far as I can see, and are working for less wages, too. It's perfect nonsense to think one man is so much better than another, and it's bad policy to keep the same help too long; they get conceited and demand their own way instead of trying to carry out their employers' plans, and are always arguing and explaining—they know too much altogether. There was Bense, a month ago, when I bought some dye-stuffs of a new firm—got them a good deal cheaper than the old firm would sell them for—who declared they were poor, adulterated, and wouldn't hold the color, and made such a fuss that I had to get rid of him, for when a man knows more about your business than you do yourself it's high time for him to go—eh, Doctor?"

Dr. Ahlstrom's face was inscrutable. What he would have answered Colonel Lee never knew, for Lawrence, the clerk, stepped through the door they were about to enter and diverted the attention of the Colonel from his companion.

In the office, Dexter, the head bookkeeper, was as usual busy with his accounts, and two or three men were waiting for supplies, for which Lawrence had gone to the storehouse.

"How's Smith to-day?" asked Lee of one of these men. "I hear he's been ailing."

"He looks bad, and he says he feels bad, but he's at work this morning. It's afraid of losing his job that brought him."

"That's right! That's right! He'll get over it, and we must have the work; you tell him it's the busy season, though he knows that well enough, and if he lays off we'll have to hire a new man, and of course if we do we shall have to keep him."

"By the way," and he turned to the book-keeper, "I noticed Hannah Kiel's looms are idle again this morning. You'd better send her a bill of her time, and I'll tell Stacy to get a new hand. This is the second half day she's been out this week; there are enough who will be glad of her place if she don't want to work."

"Old Simeon's foot was worse last night," ventured Dexter, "and you know there's nobody but Hannah to take care of him. She came in and tried to work, but nearly fainted, and Stacy told her she'd best go home. He's sent for some one to take her place and the looms will be running all right after dinner."

"Well! Well!" muttered the Colonel testily, "I've no objection to her taking care of him, but we want the work, and I can't have a set of looms stand idle half a day for any such flimsy excuse as that. She wouldn't have fainted, never fear. Stacy was a fool. There were no bones broken, and if he had any grit the old man would be back at work."

"Who's taking Kiel's place?" and he turned to the foreman of the room in which Simeon worked, who happened to be in the office.

"Two of the men agreed to take turns, and they are doing their own work and his, so that

we have had no trouble, sir. They thought as how if we didn't have to hire another man, you might let Simeon's pay go on. All the men like him, an' it's hard luck to be laid up. It's about the two new men I wanted to speak to you, sir. It was Vedder that let the beam fall on Kiel's foot, an' yesterday he came near hittin' Jem Barker in the back with an iron rod. He said 'twere an accident, but Jem thinks 'twere one of the kind done a-purpose, an' so does some others; an' Jem thinks, too, that he let the beam fall on Simeon's foot a-meaning to, 'cause he had found out some o' his plans, an' had warned Brinton's Tom to keep away from Burke's, an' look out for the Dutchman. Him an' Kateson be great cronies, an' go down to the Corners most every night, an' they be pretty full sometimes when they come back."

"Any trouble with their work?" demanded the Colonel.

"No, sir, I do' know as there is. The work is well enough, an' they're peaceable enough in the mill, but it's my belief, an' Kiel's, too, that they're up to something. I can see the men are getting uneasy, an' I think there'll be trouble if they stay."

"Nonsense! they're well enough! Let 'em alone nights if they're all right days! They won't do any hurt; and if they do go down to Burke's, it's none of your business, or mine, either. Burke don't encourage mischief;" and Duncan was peremptorily dismissed and sent back to his work.

It was twelve o'clock, the noon hour at the mills, and Roger, standing at the window of the office, watched the men and women as they hurried out into the street, chatting with one another as they walked along in little squads of twos, threes, or more.

"I have some letters to write, Doctor," said the Colonel, breaking in upon his musings, "and I usually stay here until half-past two or three, but Lawrence can take you back to Elmcroft whenever you are ready."

Roger declared that he was in no haste, and, moreover, was quite willing to walk back, and announced his intention to look over his property from the outside. Leaving the Colonel, whose offer to accompany him he courteously declined, to his letters, he unclosed the office door and stepped outside. The sun was warm, but the trees furnished a grateful shade, and a cool breeze blew from the river.

He walked slowly along, looking at the neat white houses and well-kept yards, listening to the hum of voices which came through the open windows. He smiled to himself, glad to see so many evidences of comfort and contentment; then his smile faded and his face grew grave. He remembered his uncle's letter; he recalled the conversation he had listened to but a moment before; how long would this condition of affairs continue if Edmund Lee retained the management? He had watched the honest Scotchman's face while he was talking, and felt sure that he,

at least, was anxious and uneasy, and was satisfied that he had some reason for it stronger even than that which he had given, and resolved to win his confidence.

He had nearly reached the end of the street when, looking up, he saw the handsome black horse whose acquaintance he had made so unceremoniously the day before standing tied in the shade of a tree. Its owner stood in the doorway of the last cottage, and seeing him she stepped down, hesitated as if irresolute, and then came straight to the gateway.

"Good morning once more, Dr. Ahlstrom," she said, as he lifted his hat. "I am more than glad to see you, though I fear you will begin to think that I am always in your way and always needing help; for, indeed, I do need you almost as much as I did yesterday. No, it's not Tico this time; it's professionally. Don't refuse, please. You will need neither drugs nor surgical instruments,—nothing but your hands. I rode down about an hour ago to see Mr. Kiel. Hannah, poor girl, (that's his daughter,) I found all worn out with watching and anxiety, and sent her to lie down for a while, promising to sit with her father. A beam fell on his foot last week and crushed it, but it seemed to be doing well until Dr. Welles dressed it late last night; since then he has been in much pain, and Hannah says scarcely slept at all, but moaned and groaned most of the time. She sent after the doctor again this morning, but his wife said that he

had been called away on an urgent case, and I am sure he cannot yet have received her message. I think—indeed, I am almost sure—the bandage is too tight, and was about deciding to try loosening it myself when I saw you.”

Without a moment's hesitation Roger followed her to the door and into a small, neatly furnished room, where a man of about fifty years of age sat in an easy chair with one foot stretched out on a pillow. His face was white and drawn, showing that he suffered acute pain. Miss Lee introduced the doctor to him as the nephew and successor of her godfather at Elm-croft, and requested that he be allowed to examine his foot.

With the skill that comes only with practice and the gentleness which is inherent in the nature of some men, Roger unwound the bandage and looked at the bruise. It was severe, though no bones were broken—fortunately the close, heavy shoe had prevented that—but it showed that it would take a long time for it to become strong again. It had been properly cared for, though, as Elsie thought, it was bandaged rather too tightly, and the edges of a flesh wound were held too closely by too short strips of plaster. Removing the latter and replacing with longer, the Doctor carefully rebandaged the foot and wrote a prescription for a soothing lotion in which to bathe it, which Miss Lee volunteered to get at once.

While she was gone Dr. Ahlstrom remained with Simeon and succeeded in gaining his confi-

dence, so that in the half hour he learned several things which opened his eyes to the actual state of affairs and made him chafe inwardly at his own ignorance and the almost asinine stupidity of the Colonel. He resolved to make the most of his time and find some way of averting the crisis which he saw clearly was sure to come if this man's words were true—which he never doubted after what he had seen and heard—and things remained as they were.

This was his first visit to the mills, but though Colonel Lee protested as much as he dared, assuring him over and over that there was not the least need of his bothering his head about details, every day found Roger at his desk, insisting upon taking a part in the work, not only in the office, but in the mills among the men, examining into the working of the machinery, into the quality and kind of goods manufactured, into the materials used, and above all, gaining the respect and good will of the employees. Things went on quietly enough outwardly, though his keen eyes saw underneath a growing restlessness and discontent; but he said nothing to Colonel Lee, only persevered in his efforts, and was fast mastering the business, at the same time acquiring a genuine interest in the work which surprised him.

Simeon Kiel and his daughter—who still remained in the cottage—with Duncan and Dexter, were his sworn allies, and their reports of what they saw and heard were not encouraging. Elsie Lee, who understood a good deal of what was

going on, through her questionings of Hannah, sometimes tried to talk with her father, but he always resented it and was like one deaf and blind.

The Colonel spoke one day of Elsie's frequent visits to the Hollow:

"It's no use telling her she ought not to go; she won't hear me. Her godfather spoiled her in letting her go with him whenever she wished. He did a good deal of the fixing up to please her; and she knows all the women and children, and whenever they want anything, or any of them are ailing, they manage to let her know. I never should have let old Simeon stay, or taken Hannah back, if it hadn't been for her."

CHAPTER V.

Dr. Ahlstrom had been rather more than two weeks in Barham when, going down to the office one morning, he found lying upon his desk a large, square envelope. He turned it over, examining it closely. It had an air about it quite unlike the few business letters Colonel Lee had submitted to him; moreover, it bore his own name, "Roger V. Ahlstrom, M. D.," on its white surface. He studied the motto, "Suum Cuique," upon the seal, and translating it into simple English, smiled at its significance and thought it suited well the bold chirography of the address. He could guess nothing from the postmark, and cutting carefully through the end, he took out the sheet of heavy white paper within and opened it.

"I hear the heir has come!" was the abrupt beginning. "Permit me to offer congratulations, and to express the hope that old friends may call themselves to your memory, without being considered impertinent or making a bid for gain. With your permission, Doctor, I will ride over to Elmcroft on Thursday evening. If you chance to be engaged for that particular night, will you kindly give me the refusal of your first leisure evening?"

Yours as ever,

RICHARD GRAY."

Richard Gray, the man of all others he would most like to see! He had thought of him, but

supposed that he was still in New York. It was years since he had seen or heard of him. Seizing a pen he wrote:

"If you don't come, Dick, I shall be dreadfully disappointed. Don't stand on ceremony, and don't let anything keep you. But how on earth do you happen to be in L——?"

When the brief note was enclosed in its envelope, sealed and addressed, he tossed it into the mail-bag, then leaning back in his chair—Colonel Lee had not yet arrived—let memory have full sway.

He could feel the homesickness creep over him again, as it did that October morning so many years before when, after seeing the "Atlas" sail out of the harbor with his parents on board, and waving his handkerchief until he could no longer see the answering wave from the steamer's deck, he re-entered the carriage which had brought him down to the dock and was rapidly driven to the station, whither his trunks had already been sent, and in an hour was on his way to the "City of Elms," which was to be his home for four years.

At college he plunged into his studies with an ardor which pleased and won for him the favor of his instructors, some of the older of whom remembered the father and were glad to welcome the son. It was a new life for him, this unrestricted companionship with so many young men of his own age, and it took him some time to get accustomed to it; meantime, those who

came in his way and sought his acquaintance learned to respect him for his courteous ways and manliness, though his unsuspecting innocence frequently made him the victim of practical jokes and considerable annoyance, until Richard Gray, a young sophomore whom he had been fortunate enough to help out of an unpleasant predicament, became his friend.

This Gray was a universal favorite with the men, and when he protested against Horace Campbell's plan to guy Ahlstrom, which in some way unknown to Campbell and his followers had leaked out, and threatened to make them pay dearly if anything occurred, the men sensibly decided, after some chaffing, to let him alone and turn their superfluous energy elsewhere; and from that time Roger and Dick had been fast friends.

Gray's case was like that of many lads. He was the son of an impecunious representative of an old and once prominent family, and had inherited, along with his handsome face and fine physique, the mental traits which had distinguished his grandfather and had given him a place among the leaders of the nation. He was ambitious, willing to work and struggle for an education, and never lost sight of his determination to reach the top of the ladder; though, looking up, the top seemed almost out of any possible reach for him. To prepare for college was in his power; but how to get there, given the necessary preparation, was a problem which

he saw no way to solve, though he never doubted that he should get there in time. Finally he submitted the question to one of his mother's friends; the answer came in the form of a suggestion.

"Why not try for a scholarship, my boy?" said the good old dominie, who had great faith in the lad. "You can try, at any rate, and if you don't succeed it will be no crime. I myself believe you will get it, Richard, and so, I am sure, will your mother; for I do not believe any lad of your age has a better foundation in Greek, Latin and mathematics, and they are what are needed. You can review your history and your English with me this summer, and keep up your German and French conversations with your mother. I'll indorse your application and write to President H—, who knew your grandfather when he was in Congress. Just keep cool and work away, lad."

Richard did as the old man suggested, and was fortunate enough to receive the coveted gift. True, it was not large, but it was something definite to begin upon, and his mother, more hopeful than her boy, urged him to enter, arguing that she might be able to help him a little, and that something might favor him if he did his best.

He had two essentials, pluck and perseverance—and how he worked that first year! With a power of application unusual in one so young, he studied every moment, except the brief time

necessary for recreation. He grudged that time, but he was wise enough to understand that a well-filled mind and active brain in a weak, puny body would count for little, and that if he wished to succeed he must preserve his physical powers. So, as he put all his mental energy at work when studying, when he indulged in sports he entered into them with a vim, and his companions looked with admiration on the athlete who could outdo the most of them in the gymnasium, at the oars, and in the field.

If it had not been for stern necessity, which demanded that a certain sum of money must be paid at regular intervals, the young fellow would have been perfectly happy. He was on his second year when the crisis came, and he was forced to meet his difficulties at once. Walking across the campus one crisp January afternoon, his hat drawn down over his face, his eyes bent on the snow-covered ground, too utterly miserable to be conscious of anything but the fact that he must give up the struggle, he walked straight into the arms of Professor G——, who was coming from the opposite direction, accompanied by a student whom he knew by sight, and knew to be possessed of that for the lack of which he must give up everything. Gray apologized stiffly, and was hurrying on, when he was stopped by the sound of his name. The professor was calling:

"I say, Gray, what's your hurry? You are the very man I was looking for! Come to my

room in an hour,—if you can let off steam long enough,” he added laughingly. “Will you?”

Gray signified his willingness, with a vague feeling of wonder at the request, and a vain effort to recall anything in which he had been remiss, though he was too wretched to brood over it long, and at the appointed time presented himself at the professor's door.

The professor had been called away, and it was young Ahlstrom who answered his knock and invited him to enter. It was not the professor who wanted him, after all; he had only recommended him to Ahlstrom as a tutor in mathematics, if he could and would spare the time. With Gray this was a favorite study, and he often puzzled the college instructors with his original demonstrations and his queer, though scientific solutions. This was an opportunity which he gladly accepted, and finding his pupil anxious to acquire information and studious, he enjoyed the teaching, at the same time receiving a sum of money which went a long way toward relieving him from his pecuniary difficulties. When, at the close of the half year, Ahlstrom, who really liked and admired his young tutor, and whose eyes saw more than they appeared to, invited him to occupy at a merely nominal rent a room in the small suite in which he had established himself, on the plea that he would be pleased to have him nearer, and urged his acceptance as a personal favor, Gray yielded and felt that his chances for finishing his course were assured.

But Roger's interest did not stop there. He was enthusiastic in praise of Gray's merits as a tutor, and contrived that all who could afford to pay well for coaching should hear of him; so that he became quite a lion, and to have Gray for a coach was the proper thing.

When Ahlstrom finished his college course, Gray, who had received his degree at the previous commencement, had finished his first year in the law school, and gave promise of making a successful lawyer when time and clients should give him the chance.

Roger had a plan and had already persuaded his uncle to help him carry it out. A young lawyer, no matter how talented, no matter how well he may be equipped, has, except in rare cases, to wait quite a while for his briefs, while older, more experienced men are consulted. This is right and proper; in business affairs, age and experience are valuable factors; but to get to work as soon as possible was a necessity for Gray, and Roger decided that with his uncle's help no time should be lost.

When Victor Ahlstrom went back to New York after his nephew was graduated, leaving him to pack his belongings and to bid farewell to the many friends and acquaintances he had made during his four years in the "College City," he carried with him Gray's promise to accompany his friend to the city as his guest, and to remain until the sailing of the steamer in which Roger had secured passage for home.

A night or two after the arrival of the young men, a friend of their host happened to call at his rooms and was introduced to his guests. This friend was a man of wide culture, interested in the affairs of the day, and well calculated to draw out the best thoughts of the man or woman with whom he was conversing. Gray interested him, and before he was aware of it was talking with perfect freedom of his hopes and aims and wishes to this stranger in a way which, as he thought of it afterward, was unpardonable. The gentleman, however, seemed much pleased at Gray's frankness and led him on, prolonging his call until a late hour, and when he rose to go invited both young men to call at his office the next morning. The result of that call was that Gray was offered a fair salary to assist in the routine work of one of the largest law offices in the city, and at the same time given an opportunity to continue his studies and read with one of the most successful lawyers in the country.

It was an offer such as Richard Gray had never even dared think of. It meant all that the most ambitious student could ask—friends, money, power, success, if he were worthy of it, and he resolved that he would be.

Gray remained in this office for more than a dozen years, first as clerk and student; then, as his employers appreciated his true value, they admitted him as junior partner, with a full share in all the business. At length, circum-

stances which to him seemed imperative forced him to sever his connection with the firm and leave the city.

Once only, in the years since they parted on the steamer's deck the morning that Roger sailed, had the two friends met. Spending a few weeks in travel one summer, Gray visited Europe; and in Switzerland met young Ahlstrom, who was making a pedestrian tour of the mountains with a party of friends. The latter party reached the hotel on the border of the lake as the former was leaving, and had only time for a few words that followed their mutual expressions of delight at the chance meeting, when Gray went on his way, promising to meet Roger in England a few weeks later; but before the time agreed upon, an urgent summons recalled him to America, and he sailed direct from Bremen.

It was a bit of good fortune, so Dr. Ahlstrom assured himself, this letter from his old friend, who was only ten miles distant. It gave him new courage, and he began to anticipate the promised visit. If he had not changed, and his letter seemed to show that he had not, his comradeship would make life in Barham at least endurable, and his help and advice would be invaluable in the crisis which he foresaw must come, sooner or later, in the affairs at the mills. The one thing which puzzled him was how Dick came to be in L—, so far away from New York, where he had won his reputation, and where he supposed he must be contented and

happy as a man could be in the successful practice of his profession. He determined to ask Colonel Lee; but the Colonel only knew that Lawyer Gray was considered the best lawyer in the state, that he had his pick of all the important cases in the county, and more, that he seldom lost a case. He knew him slightly, and met him occasionally at a banquet or public meeting in the city.

CHAPTER VI.

THE discontent which Roger felt, rather than saw, increased daily; and one Tuesday morning, about four months after his arrival, a deputation of the workmen waited upon Colonel Lee in his office and demanded that one of the men, who had been displaced for a stranger who had contrived to make himself obnoxious to most of the old employees, should be reinstated and the other removed. They also asked for more pay and less hours of labor, and gave their employers twenty-four hours in which to come to a decision, threatening to shut down the mills if they refused to accede to these demands.

Colonel Lee heard them in silence, and when they had finished turned again to his desk, simply asking if that was all, and giving them no reply whatever. The men lingered a few moments, but finding that nothing would be said and no further notice taken of them at that time, they went back to their work.

Dr. Ahlstrom was out of town for a day or two; the Colonel was glad of that, for it would give him time to settle the difficulty without his interference, and show him how unwise it was to have any sympathy with these working people, and that his (the Colonel's) way was the only way to deal with them.

Wednesday morning the bell rang as usual, and when Colonel Lee arrived at the office, he

found the work going on as it had day after day and year after year since his remembrance. He had not been long at his desk, however, when his visitors of the day before presented themselves and demanded his answer.

The Colonel wheeled around in his chair and faced them.

"Go back to your work if you wish to remain in the mills. If not, Dexter will give you bills of your time and settle with you. I don't want to hear any more of this nonsense; Batterson will stay and do the work, as he has been doing, and Kerry was discharged and will not be taken back; wages will not be raised, and ten hours is a day's work at Denwold, yet."

One or two of the men tried to argue, but they were met with a peremptory command to return to their work. They left the office without more words, and Colonel Lee chuckled.

"Nothing like firmness! We sha'n't hear anything more from them, you'll see! They won't want to lose their work, they're not such fools, you may depend on it! They only thought to play a game of bluff, as they are trying to do at Slocum's; and by the way, they say Slocum's getting frightened. I saw him last night and advised him to keep his back stiff and he'd find the men would come around in a few days. They meant to drive me, but"—and he rubbed his hands together—"they're checkmated this time."

Dexter might have expressed a different opinion of the situation, but he seldom ventured to

contradict his employer in anything; instead, he wished most fervently that the Doctor was at home.

The Colonel turned to his desk and resumed his work. He had been writing for perhaps an hour and was just putting his signature to a large contract for goods to be delivered the next month, when there came a sudden hush. The machinery ceased to hum and a dead silence fell upon everything.

His first thought was that something had broken, some accident had happened; and he looked anxiously at the door into the mill proper, expecting every moment to see some messenger to explain. None came, and taking down his hat, he was in the act of putting it on to go out when he glanced toward the front windows. Could he believe his eyes? The operatives were walking away from the mills. The truth flashed through his mind and he grew white with rage.

He had known Denwold Mills all his life and had never known them to be shut down except on Sundays and legal holidays and for repairs. Now they were shut down in the middle of the forenoon for none of these reasons; but because the operatives had defied him! Defied Colonel Edmund Lee! He turned to Dexter; but, after the first quick glance which Dexter had given him when the silence fell, the bookkeeper kept right on with his work, making up his accounts, and did not look around.

He sent for Duncan. The sturdy young Scotchman had been a favorite with Mr. Varholm, who had trusted him implicitly, and after the old master's death he had tried to serve the Colonel; but Lee would not be helped, and never even saw that Duncan was using his best efforts to placate the men. It was he who tried to warn his employer of the trouble brewing on that first visit of Roger to the mills.

When at last the messenger found him and brought him to the office, Duncan could only say that the men had been getting more and more dissatisfied since Mr. Varholm's death. That Kerry, who was a first-class workman and always civil, had been a favorite with and a friend to all, and that Batterson, who took his place, didn't understand his business, and that he was sullen and rough, generally in a quarrel with somebody. The men had decided that, as long as the strike was on at Slocum's, it would be a good time for them to push their demands. A few of the older employees had tried to reason with the others and to resist as long as possible; but they were in the minority, and Vedder's arguments and persuasions had had the most influence. He himself was sure that Vedder, Kateson and Batterson were the leaders and had been urging the strike for some time, though they kept away from him.

"Well, let them go! Fools that don't know when they are well off!" he said angrily. "I'll lock the doors! then maybe they'll listen to rea-

son when they find I'm in earnest. When they've had enough of it, and found out that this is my property and not theirs, and that I'm not to be dictated to in my business, let them come to me; but not one of the leaders shall ever step foot in these mills again, if the machinery rusts out and the bricks fall down! And you may tell them so."

He dismissed Duncan, finished his work at his desk, and with Dexter went through the different rooms to see that everything was left in as good shape as possible, sent for the day watchman and delivered the place into his hands, with strict orders to let no one in and to keep a careful watch outside, then he locked up the office and went home.

When Dr. Ahlstrom came back to Barham that afternoon he heard the news of the shutdown at the station and went directly to Colonel Lee for information.

"Yes, yes, it's all true! Fools that don't know when they're well off!" he said bitterly; "but you needn't worry, they'll come round in a day or two and beg to be taken back and given work."

"You forget that we have heavy contracts that must be filled, or the work will go elsewhere, and in that case we shall lose heavily."

"Let it go!" almost shouted his partner; "I won't yield an inch! If you give in now, you'll have to give in whenever you're asked. I never will! never!"

Finding that it was no use to try to talk with Lee in his present mood, Roger drove down to the village and found Dexter and Duncan, who gave him all the information they had been able to obtain, and promised to send to him immediately if there was any trouble. Then he went back to Elmcroft, shut himself in his library, and tried to think. The crisis for which he had been striving to prepare had come sooner than he expected, and he could see no way to bridge it over. If he had only been there! But what could he have done? He wasn't sure whether the men had taken advantage of his absence, or whether they had not ignored him altogether.

He paced the floor, head bent and hands clasped behind him, as he used to do in his college days when anything troubled him. Gray would have said he was studying his problem, and that he found it a knotty one. If Colonel Lee had only been out of it he would have known better what to do; but he was an ugly reality that dominated everything. Then, too, the strike at Slocum's, which had begun forty-eight hours before that in his own mills, helped to complicate matters; more especially as his sympathies were with the men, whom he knew were underpaid, and crowded by Sam Slocum, the superintendent of the concern. He had sized the man very accurately at their first meeting, had come to know something of his methods, and heard Dexter's account of the trouble as he received it from the head bookkeeper at the lower village.

This Slocum was a slick, smooth-tongued, soft-voiced fellow, a regular factor in the church work and the prayer meeting at the Hartland street church; and his large contributions to foreign missions, and his frequent gifts to objects which afforded him opportunities to get his name before the public, caused him to be considered by those who knew him only in this way as one of the most generous and friendly of men. He had held important offices in the town government, he lived in Barham in a fine house, kept many servants, drove the handsomest horses in the city, and had even been talked of as a possible candidate for Congress. To his employees he was a hard master, getting all the work out of them he could, and caring as little for their comfort and welfare as he did for the sparrows that gathered in the street before his door. He was always among the very first to cut wages, and the very last to raise them when forced. In spite of his money and position, Dr. Ahlstrom despised the man, and it hurt him to be classed with him, as he knew he must be in the talk of the town.

In the midst of his pacing he stopped short and rang the bell, ordering the servant who came to have his favorite saddle horse brought to the door. He would ride over to L— and take Gray into his confidence; perhaps, together, they might hit upon some plan of action.

Gray knew Lee personally; that is, they had had one encounter, of which the Colonel never spoke, but which accounted for the indifference

with which he had answered the Doctor when he questioned him that day in the office regarding the lawyer, and gave the latter the excuse for calling him an egregious, conceited ass, who would bite off his own nose to carry his point. It was in regard to a pension claim a year before, when Gray first came to L—. The man who presented his papers had served in Colonel Lee's regiment in Virginia, where he had in some way incurred the ill will of the Colonel, who, in seeking to discipline him, had shown a lack of judgment that had put him in an unpleasant position and made him revengeful. He saw in this application for a pension, years afterward, his opportunity, and opposed the granting of it, making himself thereby ridiculous to the lawyer and the doctors, who were satisfied that the claim was just, and it was eventually granted.

The ten-mile gallop over a good, hard road served to work off a little of Roger's excitement, though it brought no solution of the problem.

Gray's bachelor apartments had a pleasant, restful look, as the servant ushered him in. Two large bookcases stood side by side at one end of the room, and through the undraped doors one could see that a fine collection filled the shelves. The standard authors of history, biography, travel, poetry and fiction were well represented, and there was a sprinkling of rare old editions which he had picked up in his wanderings at home and abroad. Over his desk hung a fine copy of the "Three Fates," and several repro-

ductions in color of Turner's landscapes lent warmth to the gray-tinted walls. A bronze statuette of Hermes stood beside a quaint clock, in whose temple of pearl and alabaster Vulcan forged thunderbolts upon his brass anvil to the accompaniment of the sweetest, most melodious warnings, every quarter hour; a bust of Plato was on a bracket in one corner, and from the tops of the bookcases the busts of his two favorite lawyers, Caleb Cushing and Daniel Webster, calmly surveyed the master. A bright fire burned in the open grate, for the October evening was chill, and the curtains of dull Indian red shut out the night.

Gray, who had been reading, laid down his book, greeted his visitor warmly, and wheeled his favorite easy chair to the side of the hearth. He could see that Roger was much disturbed, and while he chatted with him of various things, anxiously awaited the explanation which he knew was trembling on his lips. It was not long delayed; in a few words he was made acquainted with the happenings at Denwold.

Gray looked grave. "I am sorry," he said, "but I am not surprised; you remember what I told you when you first came, that I could only see trouble ahead. John Varholm and Edmund Lee are two exact opposites. Your uncle was a man of affairs, clear-headed, kind-hearted, honorable and just in all his dealings; but he was also firm and decided, and having resolved on doing a thing, pushed it; but he was never

pig-headed like Lee. He thought of his interests and the rights of his employees first, and of his personal feelings last. Lee thinks only of himself. I do not doubt he means well enough, but he is not a man to learn by experience; in his whole life, Edmund Lee has been his only admiration, and the men who have not agreed with him he has looked upon as always in the wrong. If he could have been displaced on your arrival it would have been better for all concerned; your deference to his opinions and your apparent acquiescence in his plans have only added to his conceit; but your ignorance of the business was too great to enter into any contest with him then, and, beside, he was already in possession and had on his side the other owners, who did not know of your existence, and who would have been excusable for declining to trust to your inexperience. It may be that things are not so bad as they seem, and that this trouble will be easily settled. It may be that I misjudge him, that Lee will see his mistake and be ready to consider matters when his first anger has cooled."

"No! No! Dick, your impressions of the Colonel are exactly my own, and must have been Uncle John's also, or he never would have expressed himself so strongly in that last letter. I am convinced that his obstinacy in persisting in his own way, and his reckless disregard of the rights of the operatives, together with the carelessness with which he has discharged the old

men and the total disregard of the character of the new ones he has put in their places, is at the bottom of the trouble; but to know the reason does not make the end any nearer. The question is, what is to be done? What can I do, what steps can I take to get rid of him? For, until that can be done, it is idle to think of making terms with the present temper of the men."

The two friends consulted together until a late hour, and when Roger took his leave it was decided that he would notify the other two partners of the shut-down and await their action, or at least give them time to make any suggestions which might seem wise to them.

In accordance with this decision he went to Colonel Lee the next morning, asked him if the New York partners knew of the situation, and finding that they did not, persuaded him to wire them and see if they could not aid in a settlement.

Kersal and Farley came at once to Barham and were taken to the mills. They listened to all the details of the strike as Lee gave them, and to Duncan and the bookkeeper, who were also called in; but the two latter would say but little in Lee's presence; they feared him and were uncertain what action he might take if they should condemn his management, and chose to be on the safe side.

Neither Kersal nor Farley had any suggestion to offer. They consulted together, but all they

would say was that they were unwilling to yield to the unreasonable demand of the strikers, but could not afford to have the mills stand idle, and must find some way to compromise, as they were bound to fulfil their contracts, which were unusually heavy. They went back to New York by the evening express.

At the end of a week the situation remained practically unchanged. The operatives scoffed at all Lee's overtures on any other basis than an unconditional surrender to all their demands. They were growing insolent, and some of the more reckless were drinking heavily and muttering threats against Lee, whom they called a tyrant, and the best among them were outspoken in denunciation of his management. He found that he could do nothing with them, and began to talk of sending to Canada for families and to make preparations for ejecting the old employees from their tenements. Messrs. Shruff & Stoltzer, selling agents, had telegraphed that the supply of goods in the warehouse was almost exhausted, and more must be sent at once, as the demand was persistent.

Roger spent another sleepless night, and then, acting on Gray's advice, took the early morning train for New York. He went at once to Kersal's office, and after a brief consultation Farley was sent for. As delicately as possible Roger explained things as he saw them.

After a prolonged talk with his partners, who seemed quite impressed with the young man's

dignity and modesty and disposed to test his ability as manager, they gave him letters authorizing him to act in their behalf.

Armed with these, Roger went back to Barham and presented himself to Colonel Lee. He tried to talk with him coolly and dispassionately, and was as conciliatory as possible; but all to no purpose. The Colonel was loud and bitter in condemnation of the men who dared run counter to his wishes, persistent in his threats to procure new men immediately, and handed Roger a draft of a letter he had already sent to an immigration agent, who only waited for a telegram to forward a score or more workmen with their families.

What was to be done must be done quickly; and seeing that he could not reason with him, Roger showed him the letters he had brought from New York, reminding him that he and the two others represented three-fourths of the stock and could therefore control.

Angrily protesting, and stigmatizing their action as underhanded and treacherous, Colonel Lee threatened to sell his stock and withdraw from the concern, and so bitter became his denunciations of all three of his partners that Roger was obliged to withdraw from his presence.

Before going to Elmcroft, Dr. Ahlstrom went down to the village and notified the hands that he wished to meet them at the office the next afternoon at two o'clock to talk over matters with a view to their speedy adjustment. He

was not certain how they would meet him, uncertain whether more than his friends would come, but while he was not enthusiastic over the result expected, he felt that by taking this course he should find out definitely the attitude of the operatives toward himself, and he could then decide upon some further plan of action, if that which he had already tried should not succeed.

CHAPTER VII.

AS early as half-past one o'clock the next afternoon the men began to assemble near the office, evidently willing to hear what he might wish to say. Dr. Ahlstrom, who had been inside for an hour or two looking over the rooms, and was then seated at his desk, could hear the sound of voices, and occasionally distinguish what was said.

He smiled grimly as he heard Vedder's voice boasting that they had the inside track and would bring him to terms, the young upstart, who thought he knew all about "manerfacterin'" but who hadn't cut his eye teeth yet. They'd give him a lesson in Yankee shrewdness of which he wasn't thinking and send him back to England, where he belonged, to stay the rest of his life.

They didn't appear to bear him, personally, any ill will. It was only a few of them who spoke of him at all, and then only to deride and ridicule what they called his British swagger. Roger was not so angry but that he could laugh at their almost exact imitations of some of his mannerisms, which he was quick to recognize. Colonel Lee's name, however, was frequently coupled with oaths and curses, loud and deep, which showed how strong was the dislike and even hatred which the man had managed to arouse.

Promptly at two o'clock the office door was thrown open and those outside filed in. When the noise and confusion ceased, Roger turned from his desk and greeted them with a pleasant smile. He saw, as he looked them over, that those whom he believed to be the leaders of the trouble were there, and that each was the center of a group of the most irresponsible and roughest characters in the village, and knew instantly that they meant to baffle all his efforts for a peaceful settlement; but he was glad that they had come, and hoped that as they were in the minority, as he believed, they would do nothing which would compel him to call in the intervention of the law. With an unmoved face and resolute bearing he stepped upon a low bench which stood near, thus bringing his head a little above that of the others, and glanced around the crowded room for a full moment, giving all an opportunity to meet his eyes.

It was so still one might have heard the fall of a pin as he began his talk, expressing the pleasure it gave him to see that all, or nearly all, of those who had been employed in the mills were present; and then he briefly explained his object in calling them together. He told them that it had been decided to make a change in the management, and expressed the hope that though he had been among them but a short time, they had learned that he was their friend, and had their interests at heart. His uncle had been proud of Denwold, and he hoped to be,

and believed that if the men would work with him there would be no trouble. He told them now, for the first time, of the clause in his uncle's will which requested him to take upon himself the management of the mills, also of the request contained in his last letter to the same end. He said that he knew some of the men had cause for dissatisfaction, and that he meant to remove the cause as soon as possible; but he said no word against Colonel Lee or his rule. He told them that they could go to work the next morning, if they wished, at their old wages, which he had found upon investigation were in many cases slightly in advance of those paid in any mill making the same kind of goods in the state; and that for the hours of work, though he saw no necessity for the change, yet, if such a change became general, he should fall in with it, but should not be the first to inaugurate it.

His words were slowly and deliberately uttered, with the air and tone of a man who knew what he was saying and meant it, and they had a decided influence over his audience, who for the most part listened respectfully, though from certain parts of the room there came an occasional hiss, which was, however, quickly checked by cries of "Shame! Shame!"

"Now, my men," said Roger in closing, "I have told you what I am willing to do. The mills are losing money every day they are idle, so are you. We, the owners, cannot afford to; can you? You were content and happy in John

Varholm's time, your village was and is one of the neatest and prettiest in the state, if not in New England, and the mills always prosperous, with a reputation for first-class goods, which has kept them always in demand."

"That they were!" muttered old Simeon, "we all of us knows that well enough!"

"And it remains for you to say whether the old prosperity shall continue, and Denwold still be the pride of ourselves and the envy of our neighbors. Remember, I am asking of you no sacrifice, nothing that is not, you can readily understand, fair and just, and I pledge myself to do my part and work for your interests, which are mine also. And now, I ask publicly—and I want your deliberate answer—if, since I have been among you, any one has had cause to distrust me?" and again Roger paused and looked around him.

Cries of "No! No!" were plainly audible from all parts of the room, and one of the men said, half under his breath:

"It ain't you, we likes you well enough, but we don't want no more of the Colonel."

"The mills will be started to-morrow morning; the whistle will sound at the usual time, and all those who wish to return I shall be glad to see in their old places. What say you, Duncan? Will you come?" and Roger turned to the man nearest him.

"Indeed, I'll come, sir, an' be glad to, an' it's mony anither'll be coming beside me! We dinna like to be idle oursel's, but it's fair an' honest

treatment we maun have, an' we ain't had since the Colonel has been in the office, as you very well know yoursel', sir. He's foun' fault with ivery one o' us and for things that we could na' help. He would na' gie us the things that we needed, and if we complained he would na' heed. The wool's na' sae good as it was, an' some of the help in my room don't know aught of the work, an' it's hard getting along wi' such. I spoke my min' to him pretty plain, but he only tol' me to go back and the work would go on right enough if I were right."

There was a murmur of approval at Duncan's words which seemed to express the feeling of the majority.

"And you, Casey? What do you say?"

Casey was an elderly Irishman, "obstinate as a mule and set as a meeting-house," Lee had often said, but he was thoroughly skilled in his department. It was doubtful, Mr. Varholm used to say, if his equal could be found in New England, and though he was apt at times to be a trifle pugnacious, resenting any interference with his self-constituted rights, and had more than once let his temper loose on the Colonel, the latter, who knew that he could get work as soon as he applied for it at any mill in the county, for Casey and his ability were known for miles around, had been unwilling to dismiss him.

"I says as Duncan says. We likes you well enough! You've always had a civil word, an' I don't forget what you've done for some of us

already; an' if the whistle sounds i' the morn-
ing it's meself that'll be on hand; but I won't
work for Colonel Lee another day! Sure an' I
don't need to, aither; I could have a good job
at Barton's or at Tratford's if I'd just say the
word, but I've been here nigh on to thirty years
an' I like Denwold, an' I liked Mr. Varholm an'
he liked me, and I'd rather stay nor go. I'll
work for you an' I'll do my best, sir,"—and
turning round, facing the crowd, who were listen-
ing eagerly to his words, he cried out, "Bhoys,
let's give three cheers for the new boss!" And
they were given with a will by all but about
half a dozen, who with Vedder and Kateson slunk
away and took the road to the Corners.

Roger thanked the men warmly for their good
will manifested toward him and dismissed them.
He had no misgivings as to the morrow; possi-
bly there might be a few who would refuse to
return, but he felt sure that they would not be
able to seriously cripple him, and that they would
not be among the skilled workmen but among
those whose places could be easily filled in a
short time.

With happier hearts than they had had since
the mills were shut down, they bade the master
good-night, and talking with each other of the
events of the afternoon, went home to carry the
good news to wife and children, who they knew
would be as anxious as themselves to hear it.
The foremen remained to make some arrange-
ments for the morning and to consult in regard
to any emergencies which might arise through

the want of sufficient help for all the machines, but with Roger's promise to be at the office with Dexter and Lawrence at the hour of starting, they expressed their satisfaction at the turn of affairs and followed the others homeward.

Roger was well pleased with his success, and though he fancied there might be trouble from the men whom he had spotted, he was certain the majority would stand by him.

Putting up his papers he prepared to lock up the office, when, turning, he found himself face to face with Kerry, the last man whom Lee had discharged, and whose reinstatement the men had demanded on their visit to Colonel Lee, as one of the conditions of their return to work; and he now waited to know whether he, or the man Batterson, who had been put in his place, which was that of inspector of goods, should have the job.

Kerry had been in the mills, boy and man, for twenty years, and was thoroughly familiar with his duties and absolutely faithful in the discharge of them. Though nothing had been said concerning him at the conference that afternoon, neither Roger nor the men were unmindful of his claim; the latter felt sure that the case would receive attention at the earliest possible moment, and waited; indeed, it was not believed that any one of the three men who had long been recognized as helping on trouble of every kind in the village would be allowed to return to work if he wished.

"Well, Kerry," said Roger, "I am glad you staid. I would like to know all about your dif-

ferences with Colonel Lee. I believe you were in my uncle's employ for many years, and he must have found you a good man for the place to have kept you so long. How was it that you and the Colonel had a falling out?"

"Yes, sir, I worked for Mr. Varholm twenty years, and for the last five, ever since Wilmot died, I have been inspector; I worked with Wilmot and he showed and told me, and when he was first sick he told Mr. Varholm that I could do all right and he needn't be afraid to trust me till he got out again. Poor man, he never left his bed after he took to it, and so I was put in his place, and I never heard a word of complaint in all the time. He always bid me keep a close watch o' the cloth, and not to let a spot or a loose thread go by, an' I did it, an' we never had no cloth sent back, nor no cuts in the price on account o' damages. Dexter told me since the mills were stopped that some cloth came back last week, and that the Colonel had a letter from the agent to say there were bad places an' spots on some of the last pieces, and they'd have to be sold for damaged goods. 'Twas one day when the Colonel see me looking at every inch of the cloth on the table afore I put it on the hooks that he said I were too particular, an' it wouldn't be noticed, an' it took too much time; an' I asked him would he like to buy a grease spot or a broken place? He told me 'twere none of my business what somebody else bought, an' then, two days after,

he said I might go, he'd got a new man that knew how to take orders an' mind his own business; an' I'm thinking he does, sir. Him an' Vedder an' Kateson are together every night since he came, an' they don't get on at all with the most of the others. The Colonel thinks they're all right; but when his back is turned they talk awful, an' it's they that put the others on to make the strike."

Roger listened patiently and now said: "If what you say about the carelessness of Batterson is true, and Dexter knows about the letters, I haven't seen them—"

"An' that ain't all, either," broke in Kerry, abruptly; "the last lot of dyestuffs we got ain't as good as they ought to be. It's cheap stuff, and there'll be trouble about the fade by-an'-by, an' I told the Colonel that, too, and that made him mad again. It's true for you! I ain't been here so long to be fooled easy, an' if you don't believe it, ask Casey; he knows it, an' Bense knows it, too. 'Twere because Bense told him of it that he sent him away. Bense wants to come back, though he's got a good job at Tratford's, but he says he's lonesome, an' it ain't so pleasant there as it used to be here before Mr. Varholm died."

If this man's story were true, and Roger had no reason to doubt it, matters were worse than he had supposed. Lee had given him an entirely different reason for Kerry's discharge, and had been loud in praise of the efficiency of the new

workman. Moreover, if goods had been sent back (and he recalled what he had heard from Farley while in New York) and fault found by the agent, Colonel Lee had never intimated a word of it to him.

Telling Kerry that he would investigate as soon as possible, and meantime to remain quietly at home until he sent for him, he locked the door, and mounting his horse, started for Elmcroft. Half way there he met an Irishwoman whose husband he had once befriended.

Mrs. Finneran motioned him to stop, as he was passing with only a bow; she had something to say to him and must say it at once. She had heard one of the women who worked at the mills say that he was to meet the operatives that afternoon, and had been waiting on purpose to speak to him.

Old Mike (that was her husband) had stumbled on Batterson and two or three others the night before, when they were coming back from the Corners, and heard them threaten with the most dreadful oaths (she dared not repeat them, but crossed herself) that the mills should not start up again unless they got their will, and that they would make it hot for whoever dared interfere with them. She begged him to take care, for she was sure they meant to do him some harm, and not to let them know what she had said, for she did not disguise the fact that she was afraid that they would be revenged on herself and husband if they learned of her warning.

Roger thanked the woman for her information, promised to take all possible care and precaution to thwart any plans they might have made, and bidding her not to fear for him, as he was always on the alert, succeeded in quieting her fears, bade her good night, and rode on.

But Roger was not so easy in his mind as he seemed; in fact, some of Kerry's statements had given him a glimpse of an undercurrent which threatened more trouble, and now, coupled with Mrs. Finneran's warning, pointed unmistakably to mischief of some kind.

He wondered what they would try to do. He scarcely feared personal violence, but they might do serious injury to the buildings and machinery if they could find an opportunity, and opportunities were not wanting to men as desperate and revengeful as he knew these men to be. It would do no good to keep them at bay for this one night. To dispose of them effectually it would be necessary to catch them in some compromising act; and he at once decided on a plan of action, the success of which proved how well founded were his suspicions.

He did not stop at Elmcroft, but kept on to Barham and rode directly to the telegraph office, where he wrote a despatch to Gray, requesting him to send him two good officers from L—, upon whom he could rely in any emergency, if he could secure them from the marshal, and awaited his reply. It came within the hour:

"All right, coming by the seven forty-five."

Stopping at the post-office on his way home he found a letter bearing the English postmark, and hurriedly broke the seal. He understood the contents at a glance. He looked at the date and found that he should have received it several days earlier. If it had only come then! If he had received it one day, yes, even a few hours sooner, he would have welcomed the news it brought with joy. But now!

CHAPTER VIII.

FORESEEING that he would have to remain in America for some time, and longing for his little daughter, whom he loved so tenderly, and whose childish prattle and loving caresses he missed, now that he was settled at Elmcroft, Roger wrote to Mrs. Stanley begging her to secure a suitable escort for the child and her nurse and send them to him.

This letter, with its unconscious pathos, betraying as it did the heart-hunger of the man for the thing dearest to him, had so touched the good woman that she resolved to give her up without a murmur, busied herself in getting the child ready, and found at last what she considered an excellent opportunity.

The wife of the captain of the "Iris," a bright little Scotchwoman, was to make the voyage with her husband. Mrs. MacLeod had known little Mollie's mother well; indeed, before her marriage to Jock MacLeod, she had been a sort of upper servant at the "Hall," and afterward had made occasional visits to her old home. It was on one of these that she announced her intention to make this voyage with Jock.

Mrs. Stanley knew that the child would be as safe with Margie MacLeod as with her, and wrote to Roger explaining what she had done and acquainting him with the date of the sailing of the steamer, that he might be in New York

to meet it. It was this letter which, by some unaccountable delay, was ten days late, and Dr. Ahlstrom knew that if no accident had befallen her, the "Iris" would reach port some time the next day.

His first thought was to leave everything and go at once to meet them. Surely his child was more to him than these men whom he had been trying to bring to reason! But he had promised to start the mills in the morning, and he remembered Mrs. Finneran's warning; he became confused. If Colonel Lee had only listened to reason this dilemma could not have occurred! The night express would pass through Barham at eight-thirty, and it was now a little past five. What was to be done must be done quickly. He resolved to take Mrs. Hardman into his confidence; he would tell her all, and she might suggest something, though what he could not even guess.

When he reached Elmcroft, he went directly to the housekeeper's sitting-room. He had never talked with her of his wife or child, for in the three years which had passed since her loss Roger had not learned to speak of his wife without the quick rush of tears to his eyes and a choking sensation in his throat. Mrs. Hardman heard him now in silence, and some quiet tears fell into her lap, as she realized something of the sorrow that rested so heavily on his life; but she had decided upon a plan of action even before he had finished.

"If you can spare me Felton, I think I can manage. I have not been in New York for years,

but I used to know the city almost as well as Barham, and you will surely trust your child with me. The train leaves at eight-thirty and it is now after five," she said, looking at the clock. "Go to your dinner; but first send Patrick to me, and give Felton his orders, and I will make the few necessary preparations for the journey."

She would not listen to his protests, saying somebody must go, and it was certain he could not; there would be no danger to her, with Felton to take care of her, and the fatigue and discomfort would not be great. Moreover, the more she thought of it, this would give her an opportunity to do some shopping to better advantage than she could in Barham, and it would be a personal disappointment if he did not permit her to go; beside, she had a delightful plan, which she would not tell him, and actually turned him out of the room.

When she was alone she sat down to her writing table, wrote a note, and hurried Patrick off with it to Elsie Lee. This was its contents:

"My Dear:—I have a sudden and imperative call to New York, and *must*, mind, *MUST* go on the eight-thirty this evening. Felton will take care of me, but I have a hankering after one of my own sex. You are young and fond of travel, and if you will go with me you will make me very happy. Show this to your parents, and if you decide to go, meet me at the station.

Yours hastily,

C. HARDMAN.

"P. S.—Don't take any but hand luggage; we shall not be gone more than three days at most. C. H."

When Mrs. Hardman stepped from the carriage, a few moments before the express was due, the first person whom she saw was Miss Lee, in natty traveling costume, standing beside her father. She had fully expected to see her, for she knew Elsie would enjoy the trip for its novelty, and she was quite sure her father would not oppose it, for rumor had been nearer right than usual when, thirty years before, it had whispered that the little beauty, Catharine Hardman, had won the heart of young Edmund Lee, and that, though she gave hers to the young Southerner who was her brother's college friend, and left him to solace himself, in time, with the stately brunette whom he took to reign over his home, he did not forget.

Felton took charge of all the arrangements for their journey, and when the train reached the station Colonel Lee saw them safely on board.

Elsie proposed going at once to their berths, which Felton had been fortunate enough to secure, and though Mrs. Hardman at first demurred against sleeping on board a moving train, she soon fell asleep and slept soundly till morning.

Not so the younger woman. She wondered what could be the meaning of this sudden journey. Mrs. Hardman had said, as they stood on the platform at the station, "I will not tell you to-night; to-morrow will be soon enough." Elsie had begged her to take her own time; and then,

in the midst of her wonder, came the thought of the trouble at the mills. She had heard of it in the village, and had tried to talk with her father, but he had turned a deaf ear to all her questions, and when she persisted, gave her to understand plainly that it was none of her affairs, and that Dr. Ahlstrom's name was not to be mentioned to him; he had forfeited all right to his esteem, and thenceforth was to be treated as the veriest stranger. She knew, however, that the doctor was to meet the operatives that afternoon, and Mrs. Finneran had told her in the morning what Mike had overheard, and it was at her suggestion that the woman had gone to Roger with the warning.

She feared for him. She knew her father's action had embarrassed him seriously and really precipitated the catastrophe, and she regretted, so she said to herself, that she must give up the easy familiarity which had grown up between them. She owned to herself, there in the darkness, that she was deeply interested in the new master of Denwold, and that her sympathies were with him against her father; and, with a prayer in her heart for his success, she fell asleep.

When they reached the city in the early morning they were driven to the hotel, where, over their chocolate, the elder woman explained the mystery. Elsie listened to the story which her companion told so simply yet so eloquently, and a great pity was born in her heart for the man

who suffered so deeply in his loneliness, which made her rebel against her father's unexpressed, yet nevertheless understood commands, and she determined to do what she could to make his life brighter. It was not love, though it might be, for pity is, in most cases, near of kin; but Elsie Lee's nature was sweet and strong enough to hold those whom she chose for her friends very close to her heart, without any sickly, sentimental foolishness, and Roger Ahlstrom was a man who could understand and not misinterpret her tenderness, but be grateful for it.

Immediately upon their arrival Felton went to the steamer office to make inquiries, and upon learning that the "Iris" was not expected till some time in the afternoon, left a request that as soon as she was signalled in the outer bay word should be sent to their hotel. This message came while they were away, and immediately upon their return they drove to the wharf, arriving in time to see the great ocean liner glide gracefully up to her moorings.

They waited impatiently, watching the crowd of passengers as they hastened from the deck greet the friends who were anxiously awaiting their coming, and listened to the commands, in every known tongue, which one hears about the docks; but when the crowd had somewhat thinned, Felton went on board and sought the captain. He was very busy, but pointed below. Going down to the ladies' cabin, the man found Mrs. McLeod, with little Mollie and the nurse.

To one knowing Dr. Ahlstrom there was no need to ask whose child she was. She had the same curling yellow hair, the same gray eyes, the same broad forehead, and the same winning smile.

It was a hard parting for the matronly little Scotchwoman, who had loved the child's mother and had grown to love the child herself during the voyage, when she had been so constantly with her; and even Jock seemed sorry to give her up, as he stopped long enough to take her in his arms and give her a hearty hug and kiss, which the little one seemed to enjoy much, putting her own dimpled arms around his neck and half defying Markham's efforts to take her.

Elsie, who had accompanied Felton to the plank, invited Mrs. MacLeod to go with the nurse and child to the hotel, that she might carry back to England her impressions of Mollie's new friends; and when they were in the carriage explained why Dr. Ahlstrom had not come himself to meet them.

Mrs. MacLeod took a strong liking for Mrs. Hardman's sweet, motherly face, and was charmed with Miss Lee's gentle, womanly ways and tender voice, and went away at last to carry back a report to Eldon Hall that little Mollie's lines had fallen among pleasant people.

Mrs. Hardman proposed returning that night, but Elsie knew that, at her age, the journey would be too fatiguing, and persuaded her to let Felton send a telegram instead, and wait until the next day.

The cars were full of tourists returning home, that bright October day, and little Mollie Ahlstrom was made much of. Even the gruff old bachelor in the front seat of the Pullman looked up from his paper with a smile as the little lady clutched at his leg to steady herself, and feasted her on bon-bons, amused at her childish prattle; and when Markham, at Mrs. Hardman's request, went after her, carried her himself to the sweet-faced woman whom he supposed to be her mother.

Elsie Lee had won the favor of the little maid, and she would allow no one but her nurse to take her from the "pitty lady," as she called her, and it happened through some childish freak that she refused to go even to Markham when the train reached Barham, but clung tightly to Elsie, caressing her and kissing her repeatedly, so that it was Miss Lee who placed her in her father's arms and received his eloquent thanks for her care of his darling.

In the moment before the carriage was driven away he saw and answered the unspoken question in her eyes.

"Everything is safe, and there has been no trouble at the mills, nor is there any danger of any in the future."

The events of that night and the day following she heard later.

CHAPTER IX.

THE precautions taken by Dr. Ahlstrom had been wise. The two men sent down from L— by Gray were alert and fearless, men who had been tried and not found wanting. In their citizen's dress, aided by the darkness, they were successful in getting into the mill without being seen by any one except the watchman, and Roger, who had been expecting them.

The latter explained his fears and accompanied them over the buildings, making close inspection of every nook and corner, and satisfied himself that, up to that time, nothing had been disturbed.

It was impossible to even guess what plans, if any, had been made, though it was not at all probable that the night would be allowed to pass without some kind of a demonstration.

Soon after half past nine Roger mounted his horse and started for home. Duncan, who knew, as everybody else did in the village, that it had been his custom to ride down to the mills every evening since the shut-down, was waiting outside, and begged to be allowed to accompany him; but assuring him that he was armed and ready for any attack that might be made, and that it would be as safe to trust to Bourn's speed as to company, he thanked him sincerely for his offer and rode rapidly away.

He kept a sharp lookout before him on either side, and had almost reached the gates at the foot of the avenue leading up to Elmcroft without meeting a person, when he saw the shadow of a man creep out of a clump of trees standing beside the road. The man was so near that he had no time to put spurs to his horse, even if he had wished; for by a rapid movement his bridle was caught and held firmly.

Not a word was spoken, but almost in the same instant Roger brought the handle of his riding whip, which was heavily loaded with lead, down on the man's head; the hand relaxed its hold, and in response to a tone the horse understood, the creature gave a leap forward and dashed up the driveway to the stable.

The Doctor had ordered a sharp watch of the house and barns, and now, taking two of the men on duty, he went back, but they could find no trace of his assailant except the spot where he had measured his length in the dust. He had either recovered from the blow and slunk away or been dragged off by an accomplice; at any rate, nothing more was seen of him; neither was there any attempt at a disturbance at Elmcroft, and Roger, when he awoke from an uneasy slumber in the gray of the morning, saw that everything wore its accustomed look of peace and beauty.

At the mills, however, it had been different. It had been a night that the watchman would long remember; a night that proved the two

officers on duty with him to be fit for the responsible places which they held, and advanced their prospects for the promotion for which they waited.

Roger had, in the afternoon after his talk with the operatives, ordered steam on in readiness for the morning; and the engineer had filled his boilers, started his fires, and seeing everything in regular trim, had banked them at the usual time, examined the valves, and leaving the engine-room in the same condition that he had every night for years, bade the watchman good night and gone home.

Soon after Roger rode away from the mills, Grimshaw, one of the officers from L—, let himself out of a window on the side of the building next to the river, and took a short walk along the edge of the bank, keeping carefully in the shade of the trees and the underbrush. When he came to the end of the path, still keeping in the shade, he walked on down the road nearly to its junction with the main road to Hinton Four Corners, stopping every few minutes to listen.

On one of these occasions he was very sure he could hear the sound of voices, and waiting in his concealment, found that a party of three or four men were returning from Burke's saloon. They had evidently taken some of Dan's whiskey before leaving,—not enough to make them stupid, but enough to brace them up for the undertaking before them,—and believing themselves

unseen and unheard by any one but each other, were discussing their plans quite fully, and were very confident of their success in preventing the starting of the mills in the morning.

Grimshaw was satisfied that these men were among the most reckless whom he had ever known, and that human life and property counted nothing if they interfered with their plans; and he shuddered while he listened.

Three of the men—he did not get their names—were to enter the engine-room, overpower the watchman and gag him, if he should be so unfortunate as to be there and discover them; tamper with the pumps, and having drawn down the water, open the fires and so generate steam as to cause an explosion, which would wreck the mills, if not the village. If they could accomplish their design without discovery, as they hoped to do, the blame would rest on the engineer and watchman, whose carelessness would be believed to be responsible for the mischief. It was a bold scheme, and Grimshaw, inured to crime as he was, felt his blood grow cold; but quickly rallying as they passed on, and their voices grew more and more indistinct, he chuckled to himself all alone in the dark.

“What fools to give themselves away!” and he went back to the mills, re-entering as he had come out. He told Boulton, his companion, what he had heard, and the two men took steps to circumvent the plotters. Meanwhile they did not relax their vigilance, but kept close watch of the buildings outside and inside, listening for

every sound, lest not finding the plan which had been overheard perfectly satisfactory, or fearing that it might miscarry, they had others in reserve, which they perhaps might decide to try; but neither Grimshaw nor Boulton heard anything to disturb them until midnight.

A few minutes before twelve, Grimshaw stationed himself where he could watch the engine-room without being himself seen; Boulton and the watchman were both within hearing of a signal which had been agreed upon, and understood just what to do without loss of time when it should sound.

They had not long to wait. The last sound of the twelve strokes of the clock had scarcely died away when Grimshaw saw first one and then another, until three men had crept stealthily out from the shadows and down beside the building, where they separated, taking, as he decided, a survey of the outside. They met in a few moments near the engine-room, where they apparently held a brief consultation, and he was sure that a fourth was with them now, though when he looked again only three were in sight. They were evidently disturbed, he thought, and he anxiously watched their every movement. Finally, apparently satisfied with the result of their observations, they went up and carefully examined the door, and almost holding his breath, Grimshaw saw them begin operations.

He left them undisturbed, and they, secure in the darkness of the night and in the shadow of the trees, and, as they believed, unsuspected by

any living creature, became interested in their work, forgetting to keep up as strict a watch as they had at first intended. Just before they succeeded in forcing the heavy doors, and when they were most intent, most sure of success, Grimshaw gave the signal to Boulton and the watchman, who went noiselessly around an angle of the building and seized two of the men, who were securely bound and taken to the office, where Dr. Ahlstrom found them when he came down in the morning; but the third man, who proved to be Vedder, got away. Kateson and a young Frenchman, who had been at the mills only a short time, were taken to the county jail, pending a trial.

At this trial some curious information in regard to the strike was heard, which sounded almost incredible to many of the listeners, who had previously believed that all strikes were honorably conducted, and were the means within the power of the working man by which he could secure justice from his would-be oppressor; in other words, the thin veneer which had in their eyes made all these labor agitations necessary and respectable was swept away.

Vedder, who had escaped, was according to Kateson a labor agitator, a professional, whose business was to stir up strife between labor and capital. He was well educated, shrewd, of good address, and had a way of worming himself into the confidence of his associates; and, up to this time, had shown himself an adroit manager.

Batterson, with whom he had been in collusion, was also a recognized leader among the men, and had shown himself almost as shrewd as his chief. In some instances he had won followers by his bluntness and indifference where Vedder had signally failed.

These two knew the relations existing between John Varholm and his employees to be harmonious, and during his time had made no attempt to change them; but when Colonel Lee took possession, and old men were dismissed and new ones hired almost daily without the slightest inquiry into their antecedents, they saw their opportunity, and resolved that Denwold should lead in an outbreak in which they meant to include some of the largest mills in that part of the state, and so secure a shortening of the hours of labor, which was primarily their object, as well as to break up the quiet which had existed for so long.

With this object, Vedder went to Colonel Lee, showed him testimonials of his ability as a workman, and asked for a job; and knowing the Colonel's grasping disposition, offered to work for less than the then occupant of the place was receiving. Lee took the bait, bade him wait, and meantime watched for a pretext to dismiss Bense. He soon found one that would suffice, and sending for the latter to come to the office, he refused to listen to any explanation, but himself handed Bense a bill of his time and sent him to Dexter for his money. Vedder was handy at the Cor-

ners, so that when Lee sent for him he came at once, and soon after, at Vedder's suggestion, Kateson was given a place made vacant in much the same manner.

For several weeks the two men kept their own counsel, but as they became better acquainted with the men, and watched the ill-feeling growing against Lee, they fostered it, magnified all his mistakes, railed against his haughty independence of manner and speech, and ridiculed the Doctor, whom they stigmatized as Lee's tool, and advised the men to send him back to his pill-boxes. They taunted their fellow-workmen with being ready to kiss the hand that struck at them, until some, yes, a good many, began to grow more and more restless, and to believe they were as miserable and degraded as these two represented them to be, notwithstanding the evidences of prosperity all around them, and refused to listen to the more sober-minded and sensible, who tried to counteract the evil influence which they saw had them in its power.

A secret society was organized, and its members bound themselves to stand by one another, to revenge Colonel Lee's slights, and make a big demonstration, not only to secure the rights which they claimed for themselves, but to secure also the good-will of their craft, by being the first establishment to force up wages and shorten the hours of labor. The reinstatement of Kerry was the determination of the majority of the men, though, if Vedder could have left that out of the

demands he would gladly have done so, but he found that without that he would lose his chance of success at that time, and though Batterson was one of his lieutenants, upon whom he depended, he dared not oppose the wishes of so many.

The members of this society, which held weekly meetings by itself for some time, finally voted to join the "Union," as it was called, which had already been organized at Hinton Four Corners. This Union was in communication with others which had promised to stand by it and furnish money if needed, and during the week they had been idle Vedder had renewed the promise; but the Denwold men had not received anything, though Slocum's old employees had small sums distributed among the most needy, for it could not be denied that there was considerable suffering in the lower village.

Altogether, it was a well-laid plan to breed dissension and discontent; and Kateson, now that he was caught with no way of escape, made a full confession and brought a strong light to bear upon this new method of bending the will of employers to employees.

It was thought, in consideration of the full unfolding of their plans and the culpable part which Vedder, who proved to be the ringleader and originator, had played, that the two who had been captured would be let off with a light sentence; but Gray, who had been retained by Roger to conduct the prosecution, made a strong

plea against any clemency on the part of the court, setting forth at length and with great power the enormity of the crime which, but for great care and watchfulness, would have succeeded and brought about a destruction of life and property scarcely to be comprehended by those before him. He painted the midnight assassin in all his blackness, and maintained that these men were midnight assassins, and that if such were allowed to go free, neither life nor property would be safe—innocent people would be sacrificed whenever their selfish ends were to be secured.

When he finished, the judge, a clear-eyed, clear-headed man, arose in his place and addressed the jury.

"These men," he said, "are before the court on a charge of a gross act of malevolence, so fiendish, in fact—since they knew that, along with the destruction of property, there would in all probability be a loss of lives, whose number even they could not guess—as to put them outside the limit within which mercy has a right to rule. Then again, they have, if you consider the facts in their most charitable light, succeeded in doing an incalculable damage to the business of the Denwold Mills, which has been shown and proved to be conducted in a fair, and so far as outsiders have a right to judge, just manner. Their difference with their employer was a question which does not concern this court, and one which did not require any such means for settle-

ment. They have, moreover, brought the only lawful means which the laboring man has of forcing unjust and tyrannical employers to treat their employees fairly and justly into disrepute. Instead of men determined to right their wrongs, they are anarchists who had no wrongs to right; and the very recklessness of the plans detailed show how cheaply they regard life, as well as property. Their lack of success was due to no lack of effort on their part, but to that overruling Providence which guards the destinies of men.

"You have heard the testimony of the men connected with them in the union, as well as that of the prisoners themselves, and it is for you to say, gentlemen of the jury, how much of it you believe. If you believe it all, and the charges proved, you will say so; if there is anything extenuating which you have heard, anything which leaves a doubt in your minds, that you will consider carefully."

The jury was an intelligent body of men, many of whom had known the Denwold Mills and John Varholm personally or by reputation, and knew that this was the first attempt to interfere with the management, which had been considered to be most satisfactory and for the interest of employer and employees; and, except for the dissatisfaction which had arisen with Colonel Lee, who had been superseded by Dr. Ahlstrom before the beginning of the trial, there was no cause for complaint. After a brief

consultation, they brought in a verdict of guilty.

They were sentenced, Kateson to a term of years in the state prison, and the Frenchman, who was believed to have been a willing tool, to the house of correction.

Vedder was not seen again in that part of the country, but was heard of in the West, still pursuing his work of organizing new schemes, and haranguing multitudes of foolish, ignorant people, whom he often succeeded in persuading to lend themselves to his plans. Batterson probably joined his chief, for he never reappeared in Denwold, nor was he ever seen by any one who knew him in the neighborhood. Kateson could not say positively whether he was at the mills during their attempt on the engine, but he knew that he had been intrusted with some of Vedder's plans, and up to that time had worked under his direction.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN the bell rang, the men and women, with very few exceptions, took their old places in the mills, glad to be able once again to earn the money which, deprived of, they had sorely missed; but many faces wore a white, scared look, as they realized how near they had been to an awful tragedy. For days nothing else was talked of in the mills, in the town and at the Corners, and Dr. Ahlstrom received many letters and telegrams from strangers as well as friends, congratulating him on the happy ending of the trouble.

He was indeed fortunate, and congratulated himself; but he felt that, even with the return of the operatives, only half his work was accomplished, and the developments at the trial seemed to prove it.

He had never intended, when he came to Denwold, to make the business of manufacturing his permanent work, neither had he intended to abandon his profession, but meant to see the mills in good working order, and having secured a competent superintendent, give them into his hands, and build up a new practice in some town or city near by, or sell out his share in them and go back to England. Acting on this idea he had, until the strike, kept up his interest and devoted several hours each day to reading

and research in his medical studies. Now he realized that he must make a decision, and as he put the matter to himself, on one side was inclination, on the other duty.

As a physician, he could accomplish much good. He was well trained, and time had demonstrated his skill. In England he had won a reputation many an old practitioner had envied, and had been often sought in consultation by noted London surgeons, for to the study of medicine he had added that of surgery. He had not the least doubt that in America, in time, he could attain high rank, if he wished to remain.

On the other hand, the mills were profitable and always had been; their goods were always in demand, and there was no reason why their future should not be as prosperous as their past had been. If he should sell them they must go out of the family, and his family pride was strong. Moreover, he considered the legacy in some sort a trust, and he had become interested in the people. The necessity for action had aroused him from the morbid selfishness which threatened to obscure his nobler qualities, and had widened his mental horizon. He possessed a sanguine temperament, and believed that he could make of this little village a model such as the world had never seen.

Day after day he argued with himself; not one argument could be brought to bear on the momentous question which he did not present clearly to himself and consider from every point

of advantage or disadvantage. At last, with a sigh of regret, he made his choice and determined to cast his lot with the people whom he felt had been intrusted to his care.

No one knew what this decision cost him, though it may be Mrs. Hardman guessed something of the struggle, and doubtless Gray must have wondered; but, seeing Roger cheerful and active, and the results of his efforts in the renewed interest and the eager helpfulness of the workmen, who seemed ready and willing to carry out his plans, they both considered it only natural, after all, and welcomed it gladly, since it would keep him at Elmcroft.

Colonel Lee looked grimly on from a distance, but it was noticeable that, after the trial, he no longer expressed his contempt for the doctor openly, nor indulged in sneers or sarcasm when opportunity offered. He had learned that the approval of a whole community could not be reversed by one man's efforts, and remained quiet, though he never spoke to him, and made all necessary business communications through his lawyer. He never intended to sell his stock when he threatened; it paid too good dividends for that, and Roger, who would have been glad to buy it, did not get the chance.

Every morning punctually at eight o'clock Roger rode down to the office and entered on his duties. Much of the routine work was tedious and wearisome; but with a determination to leave nothing to others which seemed to

belong to himself, he kept steadily on in the path he had marked out. Business letters received his undivided attention, and the smallest matter brought to his notice was never passed carelessly over.

He found in Dexter, who had been in his uncle's employ for some time previous to the latter's death, an able and faithful assistant, who possessed not only a thorough acquaintance with the office work, but a familiarity with the mechanical part which surprised as much as it pleased him. He had supposed him to be merely a good bookkeeper, honest and reliable, but his removal from Colonel Lee's tyranny, coupled with Roger's straightforward, manly dealing, caused him to come out of his shell and render valuable assistance in many ways; in fact, Roger soon found it not only desirable but to his advantage to secure another assistant in the office and make Dexter an assistant to himself in the general management.

Kersal and Farley were fully satisfied with what was done and being done, and gave him unlimited control of their stock, so that, having practically three-fourths of the whole, he could do whatever he wished without fear of interference from Colonel Lee. However, Roger took no advantage of this condition of affairs, but in any matter involving the decision of the stockholders, he never failed to notify the Colonel, through his lawyer, and at least give him a chance to consent or refuse, with his reasons, if

he chose the latter course, which he seldom did.

Dr. Ahlstrom went among the men with a smile and pleasant word for each, listened to all their complaints respectfully, when possible tried to remove their cause, and when he could not, showed his inability and soothed instead of irritating them; moreover, he looked carefully after the new men who entered his employ, at the same time learning much about the old. Whenever he could, he took back the men whom Colonel Lee had discharged, though he turned no one away for that purpose.

Every man who applied for work was subjected to close questioning, and no one given encouragement who could not answer his questions satisfactorily. The custom of allowing the bosses to turn away old employees and fill their places without question, so common in many mills, Roger deprecated, arguing that these changes were frequently made for reasons other than they should be. Personal dislike, prejudice, a desire to serve a friend, with occasionally a *douceur*, oftentimes had more weight than ability or quality of work. If necessary to get rid of a hand, Dr. Ahlstrom requested the foreman to prefer his complaint, after which the man or woman was given a chance to present his or her defense, if any, and both sides found him fair and impartial in his judgments, so that neither was able to gain any undue advantage over the other. Applicants for work dreaded his keen eyes and astute questioning, and though there

were always enough to fill all vacancies, the class of undesirables who so often hang around a mill village left Denwold at one side.

On the first of December the mills were in full operation, the sales were fully as large as at the corresponding time of the previous year, his credit was unlimited, and Roger, looking back on the six months that had passed since he came to Barham, might be pardoned for being reasonably satisfied with what he had accomplished. But he meant to do still more, and scheme after scheme presented itself to him for benefiting the inhabitants of the little village. He consulted with Robert Dale now and then in regard to the possibilities of these plans; but Dale was too conservative, too cautious for him. He was a man who really had little enthusiasm in his nature, and to a man of Roger's temperament, seemed slow and old-fashioned, though he was a safe adviser. He enjoyed his consultations with Gray much better. Dick was younger and more in sympathy with him; beside, there was an indomitable push and energy about the man, even in ordinary conversation, that acted like a tonic on a nature like Roger's. He always felt better after a talk with him, and invariably found some new thought to add to his own, though Dick seldom advised, laughingly telling him that was Dale's business, he was not properly retained, and ending by entering into the discussion which was sure to follow with thorough interest.

Just now Roger had a plan which was simmering in his brain, and he was anxiously awaiting an opportunity to talk it over with Gray, before presenting it to Dale. It was intended to benefit the mill people, and the people of the town of Barham as well.

He knew that some of the men at the mills, especially the younger and less stable among them, were in the habit of spending their evenings in the saloon which was one of the institutions of Hinton Four Corners, the village below, in the town of Willextton. He had not seen any of his men badly intoxicated, but nevertheless they went there, and some of their money which ought to be used for their families went into the till of Burke, the saloon keeper.

This Burke was a jolly, good-natured Irishman, with a face marked all over with genuine good humor, and the persuasive blarney of his tongue would have charmed a fish out of water, let alone a man into his saloon. He would weigh nearly three hundred, and his laugh, which was infectious, shook his fat sides and rippled all over his smooth-shaven face. More than all, he was that anomaly among liquor sellers, not a patron of his own or any other bar. In fact, while it may be that he knew the taste of his wares, he was never seen by his customers to indulge in a drink, and on being asked by one of them, who had urged him to join in a glass, which as usual was declined, why he never tried his own liquor, Dan replied that

it made him sick, it was "intirely agin his stomach." Those who entered Burke's saloon once went twice, and gradually some of the best among the employees at Denwold acquired a habit of going down for a glass of beer and a pipe, or to lounge around for an hour or two of an evening.

Roger said nothing; indeed he knew that it was really no concern of his, except that concern which ought to animate every man who sees his brother standing on the brink of a precipice, from which he may never fall, but yet is liable to drop at any time without warning.

He managed to get acquainted with Burke, and made a couple of errands at different times into his place. As a saloon it certainly was well managed, and though Dan dispensed hard liquors as well as beer, he allowed no drunkards to linger around his bar, and tolerated no blear-eyed, swaggering, quarrelsome specimens of humanity—at least not in sight. If he had Roger would have known what to do. It was its very respectability that baffled him; but he did not give up. He determined in some way to counteract its influence, and, bending all his energies to the task, he studied every phase of the evil, investigated several attempts to grapple with it in other towns, and was slowly working out his own plans.

He heartily sympathized with the men in their desire for recreation after a hard day's work, and realized that, no matter how pleasant a home one may have, nor how dearly loved are

wife and children, there is, or should be, something in a man's nature which demands intercourse with the world about him. The social instinct was as strong in the nature of these people who worked for him ten hours a day, six days in the week, as in the ladies and gentlemen who made up his circle of friends, and change and recreation were even more necessary to their well-being. There is no way to make men and women more narrow and selfish, mean-spirited and envious, than to settle down indifferent to the joys and sorrows of others, and to plod along without ambition to rise above what is, in their own estimation, their own importance. Every healthy moral nature reaches out impulsively to its neighbor, tries to put itself in touch with that which is near, and if that is not good so much the worse, for, by more than the good uplifts, the evil and pernicious pull down.

Roger had seen this in the mills of England. The operatives were thrown in upon themselves; there was no intercourse, at least nothing that brought them in close contact with their superiors, to awaken in them any feeling of respect or ambition to better their condition. A few spasmodic efforts were occasionally the result of the labors of some philanthropic individual; but for the most part they drank their beer, smoked their pipes, slept in their dirty, ill-ventilated rooms, ate their coarse, ill-cooked food, and often became brutal. The children followed in the footsteps of their parents, and grew up ignorant and often vicious.

This was, of course, due to their peculiar circumstances, but these circumstances do not exist in America; for while it is true that there are divisions among the people of this great and glorious Republic, they are not impassable, as they are in foreign countries. The son of the poorest, most obscure and illiterate wage-earner has the opportunity to raise himself to the highest level; to be the peer of the rich man's son, and himself found a family name and heritage of which his children may be proud. There is, indeed, a power which mere money cannot buy, although it is free to be won by every son and daughter; the power which can be bought only by intelligence and education.

Dr. Ahlstrom had realized this as never before when, a few weeks earlier, he received an invitation to be the guest of a large club to which Gray belonged, in a city not far from and almost within the shadow of old Harvard.

It was a large and brilliant assemblage which gathered in the spacious hall; and as he went about with Gray, making new acquaintances and renewing old,—for many a face seen now for the first time in years, but once familiar, was there, men whose reputations as diplomats, legislators, judges, ministers of the gospel, and schoolmen were world-wide,—he could not help seeing how democratic were its members, each receiving a cordial greeting from friend or stranger, as they chanced to meet. For this one night, at least, the man of letters, whose books had been

translated into many languages; the minister, who drew crowds to sit beneath his preaching and whose influence was wide; the professor, whose words were authority in the great college; nay, the college president himself, stood side by side with the humble pastor of the village church, or the schoolmaster who went daily to his duties in the schoolroom among his crowd of roistering boys and girls.

Many a millionaire, sitting almost within the sound of the voices of the speakers, would have given willingly of his wealth to have enjoyed the privilege of mingling with that crowd; but his money could not buy a ticket to the banquet. No man, no matter how talented, no matter what service he had rendered to his kind, could belong to that "University Club" unless he could show his passport, signed by the president and faculty of the college where he had taken his degree; that alone was the sesame which admitted him. It made no difference how poor or how threadbare his coat or how lean his purse; if he was a graduate of a college in good standing, his admission was secured, and the fees were not large enough to bar him out.

At this club, matters pertaining to the social and economic questions before the world were discussed, political problems were untangled, and it was intended that the world should be benefited; but whether this would result or not, one thing had already been demonstrated; its companionships, its brilliant conversations, its essays,

had affected the work of many of its members. The pastor of the country church was quickened by contact with his more talented brother from the city, and his thoughts broadened, his spirit given new life; the schoolmaster, meeting the college professor who had given his time to the solution of some knotty educational problem, had not only received suggestions which were valuable to him, but had been able, in his turn, to touch the note which sounded an inspiration in the mind of his more favored friend, and start him on a line of thought entirely new. The poor were perhaps the largest gainers, but they had something to offer in return, something which was gladly received. It may be that it was this meeting which put into form the idea which had for some time been in Roger's mind.

CHAPTER XI.

THIS scheme, which he had been revolving in his own mind for several weeks, he now determined to submit to Gray for his approval, although he said to himself that it would make no difference to him if Gray disapproved, except to cause him to weigh it a little more carefully, and to wait perhaps a little longer, so as to make sure that he could carry it successfully forward so far as to make of it a practical experiment. But Gray did not disapprove; on the contrary, he most cordially approved, and entered into the details, as Roger presented them, with even more than his usual enthusiasm, making suggestions and promising hearty coöperation.

"Go ahead!" he said, when Roger rode over a couple of days before the new year for the purpose of talking it over with him.

"Go ahead! It's certainly a good scheme, the best I have ever heard, and if it fails it will still do much good, for it will be a failure upon which we can build new possibilities. Few men have your opportunity, money and influence. Many have the money, but you have already put yourself on record as the friend of the working man by your fair treatment of, and efforts to aid him. The people of Barham have found out their mistake in their estimate of you, and I

hear on all sides words of praise for your business management and for the enterprise that has put Denwold back again on its old basis. Go ahead with your plans! If any man can succeed, you will. Colonel Lee is unsparingly condemned for his hostility to you, which has shown signs of materially weakening under the pressure of popular opinion, and I fully believe that if you will pocket your pride and offer him your hand he will not refuse to take it, but gladly meet you all of half way; and hasn't he done so already? You have received cards for Thursday evening, have you not? By Jove, Roger, you have a strong ally in that pretty blue-eyed daughter of his; she's on your side, and if I am a reader of human nature, as a lawyer who has been in practice a half-score of years ought to be, she has a feeling for you somewhat stronger than you seem to imagine.

"I know I am opening an old wound, but time softens even the wounds that death makes, and a man could not have a brighter face to light up his home, nor a sweeter voice to make the music of his life. She almost charmed what little heart I have out of my breast, old bachelor that I am, with that song of Sears's, Christmas night. Grand as it is in itself, and as many times as I have joined in the singing, I never heard it when I felt so thoroughly the spirit of 'peace and good will' as when her pure, sweet soprano soared above the children's voices. If the angel voices were like hers, it was no won-

der the shepherds paused to listen on that 'far-off plain.' You are blushing, man! There's nothing to be ashamed of," and, seeing his friend's disturbance, he went on lightly:

"I, too, have felt the dart of the tender god! It is the one great secret of my life which you have not discovered, and I have a mind to tell you my story to-night, and see if it will not ease my heart of a burden which has oppressed it for years. Shall I make you my confidant?" and seeing the look of interest in his friend's face, Gray drew his chair a little farther into the shadow, that those keen eyes might not search too deep into the heart which he meant to lay almost open to him, and began:

"I think I have sometimes seen in your face an unspoken question which you hesitate to put into words. Knowing that my prospects in New York were so fair, my business connections all that the most fastidious could desire, you have wondered why I came here, giving up all that I had been so many years in winning.

"There was a reason, one which made it impossible for me, with my temperament, to remain longer in that city. I preferred to sacrifice my pecuniary interests, which have not been so much sacrificed after all, for peace of mind.

"Five years ago I had all a boy's buoyancy of spirit with a man's ambition. I was successful in everything I attempted; there seemed to be some good genius guiding or guarding my every step. I won confidence, and every hour of

my time was filled. I had resolved that it should be so. I worked hard, and was glad and willing to work, for I loved my profession as well as you did yours; even better, I think, for I made it for years my mistress.

"Society welcomes a successful man, and it welcomed me with open arms. My name was on the membership roll of two of the most aristocratic, most exclusive clubs in the city; invitations to parties, dinners and receptions poured in upon me. People who had forgotten the existence of my parents suddenly remembered my grandfather, who was for many years a leader in the political movements of his party, and seemed determined to make the acquaintance of the grandson. Many an honor would have been thrust upon me if I had not pushed it away with decision. I must make myself a power in my profession before I attempt anything else, was my resolute answer to all. My friends and supporters smiled as they seemingly acquiesced, although I frequently overheard one say, 'His time will come; he is young and can afford to wait.' Fair faces wore their sweetest smiles for me, and looked chagrined when I passed them by. I do not say that I was not pleased and flattered by so much attention, but I never for an instant wavered in my purpose, nor allowed my business to suffer.

"One evening, at a musicale given in one of the most charming homes in the city, I met a young girl who was just emancipated from the

thralldom of college life. She was not beautiful, at least not what the world is accustomed to call so, but the sweet, womanly nature, the pure light which shone from her fine eyes, and the music of her voice gave her a charm which mere beauty never gives. She was a brilliant pianist, a skilful organist, while her singing was faultless, like the warble of the nightingale at dusk in your English lanes. You remember, I was always an enthusiastic lover of music—it was my one passion, the one accomplishment I ever cultivated—and, after hearing Alice Wadsworth sing some exquisite old English songs to her own accompaniment, I sought and obtained an introduction to her. The more I saw of her the more infatuated I became. When she was present, the most stupid entertainment, the dullest dinner, was a delight; if she was absent, the most brilliant social function was a bore. I knew my preference was sufficiently marked to be noticeable to those nearest us, but I did not care so long as I was convinced that she was not displeased. I had been an occasional caller at her uncle's house before she came, now I redoubled my calls.

"I acknowledged to myself that I loved her, that she was the one woman in all the world whom I could gather into my heart and be content, and I believed that she was not indifferent to me; but I was not quite ready to marry and set up a home for myself. I was young, so I reasoned, and I was ambitious to surround my

wife with every luxury money could procure. I was well off, with every prospect of becoming able to satisfy my most extravagant desires in a few years, and so I waited, and did not say the words which trembled on my lips.

"One April night I attended a dinner party and dance. Alice was there, and I had danced with her once, when she requested me to get her a glass of water. Finding her a seat beside her aunt, I hurried away and was passing through the hall, which seemed for the moment deserted, when I heard my name spoken in a low voice. The speaker and a companion were in an alcove, screened from observation by some very large palms, and, I imagined at the time, believed themselves alone, for since I could not see them, I fancied they could not see me. I have thought since that Miss Graham's lynx eyes were perfectly well aware that she had an auditor and who it was. I moved a little to one side and paused involuntarily.

"'Did you ever see,' she was saying, 'such a fool as that Gray! He is forever dangling after Alice! He's all of ten years older than she is, and all her friends are wondering at his taste. Alice is well enough, but she is only just out of school, you know, and means, so she says, to have a good time before she settles down to be any man's wife. Bess teased her yesterday when I was there, but Alice was in sober earnest when she said she found it sweet to be adored, and a little harmless flirtation would help to pass the

time, and make the real thing all the sweeter when it came. Beside, it's no secret in the family, Bess told me before she came, that Ned Arkwright, who has been her shadow ever since she put on long dresses, is to be her husband when she tires of her freedom, and meanwhile he is to be taken into partnership by her father this spring. Alice expected that Ned would come on to go home with her, and Bess said that he would be here this evening; they waited for him; that was the reason they were late. I can see that Alice is awfully cut up because he didn't come yesterday, but I believe she had a telegram just before she came saying he would be here tomorrow morning, so we'll see him at luncheon. Of course you'll go.'

"For a moment I was dazed, but I got out of the hall, found a servant, and having secured a glass of water, took it to her myself. When I reached her side, I found her in close conversation with a young man, a stranger to me, and evidently a new arrival, whom she introduced as her friend, Mr. Arkwright, expressing her pleasure that he had succeeded in making connections which enabled him, though late, to be in time for the dance which she had promised him.

"I must have gone through with the introduction creditably, for I do not remember to have attracted any special notice; but the rest of the evening was a blank. I walked, danced and talked, but my only thought was to get out of sight as soon as possible.

"I knew that Miss Wadsworth was to leave for home the following evening, and had very nearly perfected my plans for making a sudden, hurried trip to Washington, ostensibly on business. I meant to offer myself as a traveling companion, and, if circumstances favored, to stop at Baltimore, her home, on my return. When once under her father's roof, I whispered to myself, I would tell her the story of my love, and ask her to wait for me one more year. To know that she was dealing treacherously with me, allowing herself to seem pleased with my attentions while promised to another,—and I had no doubt that she was Arkwright's promised wife, now that I had seen them together and marked their familiarity,—was a terrible blow.

"When we separated that night I shook hands cordially with both Miss Wadsworth and Mr. Arkwright, expressed to the former the pleasure I had felt in her society, especially in the music which she had so willingly contributed to the general enjoyment during the winter, and my regret that our acquaintance was to terminate so soon, adding the hope that she might soon repeat her visit, and bade her friend and herself good night, and not good-bye, as I was to meet them at the luncheon to which her cousin had asked a few friends for the next morning.

"When I reached my room I found a note from one of my partners requesting me to represent the firm in a conference to be held in Phil-

adelphia the next day. The date had been unexpectedly changed, but as we were prepared, if I could and would go, there would be no loss to the firm. I gladly accepted the commission, and wrote a brief note to Miss Cahlman, asking to be excused from the luncheon because of urgent professional business requiring my absence from the city, and begged her to make my adieus to her cousin and Mr. Arkwright.

"I did not see Miss Wadsworth again for three years, although I heard from her cousin that she had gone abroad for a stay of two years or more. I avoided society on the plea of business and confined myself closely to my office.

"One day, not quite three years after the event which I have related, I received an invitation to attend a reception at the Cahlmans' to meet the bride, Mrs. Robert Cameron, née Miss Wadsworth of Baltimore, who had recently returned from Europe with her husband. I was alone in my private office, and my surprise at the name was so great that I nearly sprang from my chair. Ned Arkwright could not be turned into Robert Cameron; so it seemed she had played him false, too, and I branded her in my thoughts as a heartless coquette; yet, nevertheless, I had a strong desire to look on her face again, to hear her speak, and see the man she had concluded to honor with her hand—heart, I said to myself, she never had.

"On the night of the reception, I joined the throng of society worshippers who filled the spa-

cious parlors of the Cahlmans' beautiful home. As I entered the door, I saw Mrs. Cameron, and thenceforth I had eyes only for her.

"The years that had passed had added to her charms of person and manner, and she was far lovelier than I had dreamed possible, while contact with the best society at home and abroad had made of her a cultured, polished woman of the world. From the moment when our hostess presented me, I fell completely under her influence.

"When Mrs. Cameron's duties for the evening were over, and she was free to mingle with her friends, I found a seat near the divan on which she was resting, and we entered into conversation. She seemed frankly pleased to meet me, herself recalled the pleasant winter which she had spent in her uncle's family, and asked after mutual friends. At last an opportunity for which I had been striving presented itself, and I remarked carelessly: 'I expected to greet a Mrs. Arkwright when I saw you again after our parting three years ago. You remember?'

"'Oh, Ned, you mean!' she said. 'I remember; he came to go home with me, and how vexed I was that he did not get here in time to go with us to Mrs. Wentworth's party. I've almost forgotten the reason, but I think there was an accident which delayed his train; but he dressed in his compartment and succeeded in getting there in time to meet some of my friends. He is in Baltimore, the junior partner in my

father's firm, and an ideal business man, so all our friends say. He is father's right-hand man, and he says he could not get on without him. He was married just before I went abroad to my dearest friend, and they have a dear little daughter who was given my name, and the coziest, prettiest home in the most delightful suburb of the city.

"Ned and I love each other dearly as brother and sister; we were brought up together. His parents died when he was only eight years old, and my father, who was his guardian, took him directly to our home. I was only four then, and the big boy was very kind to and watchful of his little sister, as he used to call me. When he entered college I was just entering Madam Drayvon's private school, and later came to Vassar, where I was graduated in June, before my visit to my cousin. Cousin Bessie and I were in the same class, and so were Miss Graham and Miss Vavanti; you remember them, do you not? They used to be here at Bessie's very often that winter. Ned and I have always been simply brother and sister, and I do not think either of us ever thought of a nearer tie. Have you met my husband, Mr. Cameron?' and she began to talk of her life abroad and the pleasant experiences which had been hers.

"The Camerons took a handsome house in the city and entered at once into its social life. You were sure of meeting there the most truly cultured people, both resident and visiting; for

no traveler of prominence came to the city that did not find his or her way into that delightful home—artists, men of letters, statesmen, diplomats, philanthropists, men and women prominent in all walks of life, and the best thought of each was called out by the charming personality of this woman and her husband, who, I had to admit, was for her a most worthy mate.

“I was a frequent visitor, and the beautiful home life of these two was a mockery to me of what might have been had I been less credulous, less easily duped by a few false words; for I have never doubted, and never shall doubt, that I might have won Alice Wadsworth’s love, and what a difference it would have made in my life! Ah, Roger, love is a strange tyrant, bending us at will.

“I tried to put her away from me, and resolved again and again to accept no more invitations to the Camerons’, but to avoid them on any pretext; but regularly, when Thursday evening came, my footsteps involuntarily turned toward their door, and once there I staid, drinking in, like a man intoxicated, the beauty of her face, the music of her voice.

“I think I must have gone daft or committed some unmanly folly had I not determined to cut loose from my thralldom by leaving the city. I dared not make my decision known until I had perfected my plans, and so committed myself that I could not change them, well knowing what a storm of reproaches and protestations I should encounter.

“When I announced my determination my partners were amazed and refused to consider any dissolution of the partnership. They were willing to give me any help I might wish, or to allow me an extended absence, but would not listen to my leaving the firm. I finally convinced them, after calling my old friend, Dr. Moncure, to my aid, that absolute rest and freedom from all mental work was a necessity; for, indeed, the doctor had warned me that I was taxing my powers to the utmost, and that when the Gates-Allen contest, in which I was special counsel for Allen, and of which you must have read in your English papers, involving as it did a very large property, was ended, I must stop or pay the penalty. I won the case and received a very heavy fee. Then I closed up my business—though I am still consulting counsel for the firm and always take charge of any matters which they have to bring before the courts of this state—spent six months in enforced idleness on the Pacific slope, and, through a curious combination of circumstances, settled here in L— for a time, though I never expected to make it a permanent home. I have found, however, plenty of business, and that which has paid well, though of course not as well as my New York office; but, if my fees are less, the expense of living is also much less. Your coming to Barham was one of the most fortunate things that could have happened to me, and has given a zest to my life it would not have known otherwise.

"Your plans have interested me, and I think I have almost as much interest in the mills and the workmen in them as you have yourself. I hoped that Lee would offer his stock for sale as he threatened, and have had an understanding with Dale to buy it for me, if he could get hold of it at any reasonable price; but Dale has always insisted that Lee never meant to sell, the profits being greater than on any other of his investments, and that his threat was merely his way of showing you his importance, and, when you disregarded it so openly, it would never be repeated.

"I have seen Mrs. Cameron but once since leaving New York; for although I am frequently called to that city, it has always been necessary to give all the time I could remain to business. A year ago I was detained in Boston over night, and at the theatre where I went to pass the evening I saw her in a box with a party of friends, her lover-husband beside her. They discovered me almost at the same moment in which I first saw them, and Mr. Cameron sent a messenger with his card, upon which was pencilled an invitation for me to join them. My business suit, which was out of keeping with the dress suits of the gentlemen and the elegant toilettes of the ladies of the party, gave me an excuse for declining; but not to make myself conspicuous, I decided to make a brief call. My greeting from both Mr. Cameron and his wife was most cordial; they refused to accept any excuse

for my leaving until the play was over, and the evening passed very quickly, though I have never remembered anything of the play.

"Cameron and his wife are devoted to each other, and I am glad to know that the mistake was wholly mine; but it seems sometimes as if my loneliness was unbearable. Ah, Roger! Many an old bachelor has longings for that which he is so often accused of not valuing! I am not cynical; I am not willing to call myself sentimental; nor am I covetous—at least I try not to be—of another man's wife; and I have not given up the hope of overcoming my foolishness and winning the affections of some pure, sweet woman who will make me forget, will make for me the home I would like to have, and in whose heart I can safely trust.

"I beg your pardon for inflicting upon you this long story, which, until to-night, has never passed my lips, and which to all my friends would be a great surprise; but somehow I have been in a mood for coming to you ever since Christmas eve."

To Roger this story of his friend was both a surprise and a revelation. He had wondered again and again over his friend's separation from the New York firm of which he knew him to be a most valued member; but now he appreciated the delicacy of the man who could give up so much, while fleeing from what seemed to him to be a temptation. It was a revelation, though one Gray had never intended to make; and Roger,

when they clasped hands at parting, smiled to himself, and all alone in the dark, on his homeward ride, searched his own heart, and was not troubled by the truth he sought and found.

CHAPTER XII.

THE morning of the last day of the year was clear and cold, though the winter sun was shining bright. As Elsie Lee looked out over the snow-covered hills, underneath the beautiful arch of blue, she involuntarily uttered from her inmost heart a glad thanksgiving for life and health, for youth and strength, for the very joy of living.

This was to be for her a busy day. From morning until evening every hour was full. The arrangements for the evening of the morrow, when her mother and herself were to receive their friends, were to be completed; the pretty dress was to be tried on once more, to make sure that nothing was wanting to make it perfect for the wearer; the quartette of girl friends who were to assist were to come in to talk over matters and discuss the little details, so small and seemingly insignificant in themselves, and yet so necessary in order that the wheels of society may turn smoothly; the New Year's greetings were to be prepared after a fashion of Elsie's own—tiny notes, ending with a "Happy New Year," and visiting cards bearing the same kindly legend to be placed in envelopes and sent on their mission of friendship and good-will.

The time passed swiftly, and it was quite late in the afternoon before she found time to drive down to the village for Duncan's little daughter,

whom she had promised to bring up to town to make her small purchases of gifts with the dollar her father had given her, and to look at the store windows, which, with their pretty decorations, seemed to the child like glimpses of fairyland. The little girl's delight, however, fully repaid her for the effort she had to make to keep her promise, and they spent so much time in looking about and in considering the purchases that the gray twilight of the short winter day had faded into dusk before she set her down at her father's door; but she was not afraid, for the stars were bright and the white snow gleamed beneath.

When about half way back to Elmcroft, she saw just ahead of her a man lying in the road. He had evidently fallen, and Elsie could not tell whether he was dead or alive, intoxicated or badly injured, for she could not discover the least movement. It was a lonesome part of the way, with a steep embankment on one side, and on the other a forest of tall pine trees. The man lay on the side next the embankment, and so near it seemed as if it would require only a slight movement to send him over on to the stones below, in which event he would be severely injured, if not killed.

She hesitated for a moment, then jumped from her sleigh, and pulling, or rather rolling the helpless form across to the other side of the road, stood looking down at it, knowing that the man must soon be removed or freeze. The scent of his breath, as she bent over him, assured her

that he was not dead, and she did not like to leave him there. She knew that she could ride on and notify the police, who would in that case arrest him, or she could go back to the mills and tell Dr. Ahlstrom, whom she had seen writing at his desk in the office as she passed by the window. While she waited she heard the sound of bells, and was relieved to see a sleigh, with the Doctor and Patrick in it, coming toward her. When they saw her, Roger sprang out and came quickly to her side.

"What has happened? What is the matter?" For answer, Elsie pointed to the man lying at her feet.

"He is not dead," she said, as Roger bent over him.

"I should think not! He has imbibed too freely to die, or even freeze easily, but this is no place for him on a night like this," and with a look of pity and disgust, he turned the face up to the light of the stars.

"Do you know him, Patrick? I should think I had seen him somewhere about here, but whether in Barham or Willexton I am sure I cannot say."

"I believe he's a man from the Corners, sir," answered Patrick. "Hartley is his name, an' I'm thinking I've seen him with some of Slocum's men up around Karlow's. He'd better have waited until the mornin' before beginnin' to celebrate."

"Well, never mind; if you think he belongs at the Corners help me load him in, and I'll take

him home. Dan Burke will know where he lives. Miss Lee will give you a ride to the avenue, and I shall not be gone long."

Like a log the two lifted the helpless man and put him in the bottom of the doctor's sleigh, putting one of the robes, which they folded for the purpose, behind his head, that his neck, over which he had no control, might not be dislocated by the motion; then Roger drove back, while Miss Lee and Patrick drove on toward the town.

"It's bad to see a man the loikes o' that one," said the talkative Irishman. "Mos' o' thim loikes a dhrop o' the stuff now an' thin, but not many gits as bad as him, I'm thinkin'. It's a shame they buys it at all, 'stid o' suthin' for the wives an' the childers at home."

Elsie shivered. "Why do they do it, Patrick?"

"For nothin', jes' nothin' at all, only to dhrink it. "Don't you remember Moike, as was wurkin' for the master whin I be's a fust comin' here? Him that lived in the little white house across the medder wid his wife an' three children? He was a good feller enough whin he hadn't a dhrink in him, but whin he had he was a rig'lar divil—I axes your pardon, Miss Elsie—but he was that ugly that the horses an' cows used to look sidewise out o' their big eyes an' lay back their ears whin they see him a-comin'. The master talked to him ag'in an' ag'in, but it did n' do no good at all, though he was allers a-promisin', an' a-promisin', an' a-breakin' on 'em all the time; an' one day Mr. Varholm sez

to him, sez he, 'Moike, I can't take ye back ef yez comes this way ag'in. I'll be sorry for the wife an' children, but I can't thrust ye about the barns with your pipe and matches; so remimber, ef yez comes onct more loike yez was las' night, ye mus' go;' an' Moike, he promised by St. Matthew he would n' niver ag'in, an' him havin' a bottle in the hay all the time, an' what does he do, as soon as Mr. Varholm was gone back to the house, but wint straight to the bottle, an' me a-peekin' out at him through a knot-hole in one of the stalls. He tuk the bottle an' hild it up to the light, an' loked at it, an' thin he jist pulled out the stopper, an' afore I could git to him he had poured about half of it down his troat. Whin he seen me he wanted to fight, an' guv me a black eye afore I could twist mesilf, an' git out o' his way; an' thin he went into Bourn's stall to lead him out to water, an' the horse kicked him, an' you remimber broke the two bones in his leg, an' he was laid up all summer. The whole lot of 'em would have starved ef it had n' been for the master, an' Mis Hardman, an' yoursilf. You'd have thought, whin he got out ag'in, he'd have stopped the dhrink, but he did n', an' we had to let him go. Las' week he was arristed for stabbin' a man whin he was full, an' he'll prob-erly git a sintince for years, an' the wife an' children will have to go to the poor house, an' a better home, too, it'll be than they've had with Moike pretindin' to take care of 'em.

"It's a pity they voted 'Yis' las' fall. The saloon gits the money, and the divil takes the man!"

Patrick did not drink; he was a member of the Father Mathew total abstinence society of his church, and Father Teely had no better or stronger supporter in his efforts in the parish in behalf of temperance.

At the foot of the avenue Elsie drew rein, and Patrick, with a "good night to ye, an' a happy New Year to ye, for the morrow, bless your swate face," left her.

Meantime, Dr. Ahlstrom had driven down to the Corners with his unconscious companion, and stopping at Burke's saloon, summoned Dan out. Drawing down the robe, and setting the upturned face in the light that streamed through the open door, he said:

"Well, Burke, who is he? I found him, or rather Miss Lee did, in the road above the mills. No, he isn't dead, man!" as Burke gave a frightened glance at the white face lying against the dark robe. "He isn't dead, though he might as well be, if this is his habit. But where does he live? His name is Hartley, and he belongs somewhere in this neighborhood. You know everybody, so tell me, and I'll carry him home. I hope he hasn't any family, for I'd sooner face a battery of artillery than see his wife or children. A happy New Year it'll be for them, bringing this wretch home to them, won't it?"

Dan made no reply, but stood looking helplessly, first into the Doctor's face, and then down

at the wreck of a man at his feet, and there was something in his face that seemed to Roger like a question.

"No, no!" he said, impatiently; "you are not to blame this time, anyway. He didn't get it here; probably somewhere in Barham. I'm not blaming you. My man, who was with me when we came across him, told me his name, but he could only tell me beside that he thought he lived down near the Corners."

Dan Burke seemed to shrink into himself at the Doctor's words, but he found his voice at last.

"It's Tim Hartley, an' he lives a mile out on the King's Turnpike, in a bit cabin, an' he has a wife an' five children, an' an ol' mither. He's been out o' work mos' a month, 'cause they got afeared o' him down to Slocum's. They couldn't thrust him since the sthrike, Barney Nolen said, but they kep' him awhile, an' thin they told him to go. His wife came here lookin' for him not long ago; she said the baby was sick, an' he wint for the doctor, but she hadn't seen the doctor nor him aither, an' didn't know what to do. I sint one of me bhoys after Dr. Welles, an' tol' her to go home. Tim hasn't had a drop here—"

"Since his money was gone!" interrupted the Doctor, as he drove away in the direction of the turnpike.

Dr. Ahlstrom had little difficulty in finding the little, old, wood-colored shanty described by Burke, and was not surprised to see a sleigh, which he recognized as Dr. Welles's, standing be-

fore it. He jumped out, opened the door gently, and looked in. It was a pitiful sight. In the living room, the only room in the house except a tiny bedroom opening from it and a long, low, unfinished loft above, which was reached by a rickety staircase in one corner, sat the mother, holding in her arms a little child two years of age, though it was so small and emaciated that if one had not seen the old look on its face, it would have seemed much younger.

Dr. Welles was a kind, if somewhat pompous man, whose sympathies went out to the distressed and needy, and he was trying his best to relieve the pain which was so acute as to distort the poor little pinched features out of almost human semblance. Roger stood a moment, until the doctor looked up, when he beckoned him out.

"Welles," he said, "I have a job before me, the hardest I ever set myself to do! Out here, in my sleigh, is the wretch who is the father of that child—a strong, able-bodied man, whom they call a good workman, able to earn good wages—dead drunk. I am sometimes disposed to question the Almighty for allowing such trash to cumber the earth, making miserable all who come near them. But this is not the time to argue; we must get him in," and, with an effort, the two men carried him between them into the little bedroom, which, though bare of anything except an old bedstead and bed, was as clean as hands could make it.

.

The poor mother's dry-eyed misery was more than Roger could bear, and her "God bless you, kind sir!" was pathetic enough to start the moisture in the eyes of both gentlemen, used as they were to scenes of misery and grief.

Dr. Ahlstrom had made up his mind, during the drive, to make one more effort to save the man, who was, to the majority who met him, only another drunken Irishman, but who was also, nevertheless, one of God's children. He was going away, intending to look in upon them the next morning and bring them some assistance, when Dr. Welles asked his opinion of the child.

"Lack of proper nourishment, you know as well as I do, Welles, and a fever brought on in consequence. I know you will do all that can be done, but I doubt if any power on earth can save it, and it is a mercy to mother and child that there is a place where it can rest."

Roger drove slowly toward home, and as he came again in front of Burke's, with the gleaming lights and the sound of merriment, he stopped his horse and looked in through the uncurtained window. He saw within several of his own men; he knew he should see them, but he shivered slightly. Could they find nothing better, no other place in which to spend the eve of the New Year? What would be the end of it? And he drew his hand across his eyes to shut out the sight, as Dan handed Bristow a glass of something that looked like whiskey, and another a

glass of beer. Gathering up his reins, he drove rapidly home.

His plans were perfected already; with the New Year he would begin; Sampson Cutter should make the estimates, and no matter what the cost, he would make a determined effort to prove himself a formidable rival of the genial saloon keeper, and God helping him, would succeed.

He tried to seem at ease, to talk and laugh as usual, but it was of no use; he went into the little sleeping-room with its dainty furnishings, adjoining the nursery, and turning up the light, gazed long and earnestly at the little sleeper; he wanted to gather her in his arms against his breast, but she was resting peacefully, and instead he bent down and touched his lips softly to her forehead; then he rapped at the housekeeper's door.

He told Mrs. Hardman the short, sad story, sure of her active interest and sympathy for the unfortunate family. When the sleigh came to the door at seven o'clock the next morning, he found a basket ready packed with food and other necessities waiting for him.

As he had expected, the little one was past all help, and the mother, worn out with watching and anxiety, was asleep beside it. The father, blear-eyed and stupid, a picture of besotted misery, was only anxious to get another drink to appease his thirst. Roger could not talk with him, for, to all his words, he answered only by

a stare and a single monosyllable; and giving the basket to the oldest girl, with a promise to notify Father Teely and to come again himself, he drove away.

Dr. Ahlstrom felt singularly depressed. Not that this was a new thing, but because it came before him at a time when all his world was full of joy and festivity; at a time when he was full of resolutions, looking forward to helping the men in his employ. He could and would aid them if they would let him, and he knew some at least would be glad to accept the aid; but how could he prevent the suffering and misery that would come so near? His eyes and ears must still be tortured with sights and sounds like these, and who was to blame?

Ah, yes! that was really the question—who was to blame? He shut himself in his library and paced up and down the floor. Places like Dan Burke's and others not so well managed in Barham and Willexton were directly the cause, but there was something back of them, even, something which made them possible.

He had not heard Patrick's exclamation: "What a pity they voted 'yis' last fall, Miss Elsie!" as he rode back with her the previous night; nevertheless, it was the very thought that came to him now, and he remembered to have heard it said also, "They always vote 'yes' in Barham and Willexton; it would make a big difference in the taxes if they didn't." So, then, it was a matter of policy. He had never given the

matter much thought; that is, the matter of the license fees. Did they make such a very great difference, after all? Was not the greater part of the money expended in punishing crime and in paying for the added protection which these fees made necessary? He had not voted at the election, and so was not in one sense responsible. He was not registered at that time, but, if he had been! Conscience was inexorable and demanded, "How would you have met the issue?" and he was forced to admit—"I, too, should have voted 'yes.'" Then conscience went on sternly, "Why do you lament and call an evil that which you would have helped to foster had you been given the chance? Why are your fellow-men culpable for doing that which you, yourself, would have done? If right for you, then it was also right for them!" and all the excuse he could offer was:

"Why not? I am not my brother's keeper!" and the answer came so sharp and clear that it startled him:

"You are not, but you ought to be his helper, not in his ruin, but in his uplifting—"

"And, with God's help, I will be," he said aloud. "I shall never have to say again that I helped to make men brutes—aye, and worse than brutes."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE old Lee mansion, a relic of Revolutionary times, stood in the shade of two large oaks, so old that nobody knew by whose hands they were placed there, or, indeed, if they were not a part of the "forest primeval."

Legends were told in the family of the Indian braves who climbed into the branches to see the white squaw feed her papooses, and, pointing their arrows at her and at them, threatened to shoot if she did not give them the firewater for which they thirsted. The tradition further said that if it had not been for a friendly Indian, whom the mistress of the house had once befriended, they would have carried out their threat. Still other traditions told of one Grantham Lee, who, being the only white man left in the little settlement when all the others had gone on a short expedition to save some stores which were in danger, climbed up into the upper branches of one of these trees, and remained there for more than an hour, while the Tories passed through the place on their way to secure the very same stores, which they had heard were hidden not far off, but which were fortunately removed just in time to save them, thanks to the warning of the same friendly Indian who had saved the Lee family. Evidences of those turbulent times were still to be seen in the east wing of the house, where a couple of bullets

had ploughed their way just above the door, and still lay imbedded in the heavy timber.

These Lees were an old family, and were as proud of their lineage, which they traced back through many generations, as were the Vere-de-Veres. The portrait of the first of the name who came to this country and built the log cabin which originally stood on the spot, beneath those ancient oaks, hung in Edmund Lee's library, and his commission as a magistrate of the colony was one of his most treasured relics; for Colonel Edmund Lee was prouder of his descent than any of his ancestors had been, and had gathered all the relics and records of the family he could find. He was proud, too, of his own contributions to these records and relics; proud of the title he bore, and of his military career. His own commission as colonel, handsomely framed, hung beneath his crossed swords over the mantel in the library, and the casual visitor could not help noticing that his eyes often rested on them while talking. He had also many relics of those grim years of war; and strange to say, was mustered into the service with those who answered Abraham Lincoln's second call for men, and mustered out when the strife was ended, and, as he was fond of telling, never received more than a slight flesh-wound in all that time, though he never failed to lead his command, and was brave almost to rashness.

The beautiful old house had put on its most attractive appearance on this first night of the

new year; for in accordance with an old custom, begun on Colonel Lee's marriage, which had been on the first evening of the year, every recurring first of January since he had summoned his friends and neighbors to help him keep the anniversary.

The hostess, still a handsome woman in spite of her years, which she seemed to bear lightly, in most becoming toilet of black velvet and lace, with gleaming jewels, stood in the center of the long parlor with her daughter, whose blonde beauty was heightened by a dress of creamy white silk, with garniture of pink roses, and received her guests with such charming cordiality as to put them at ease at once. It had often been said in her youth, and emphatically repeated in her later years, that Mrs. Lee's tact and perfect taste were unmatched in the city. To-night she was faultless in both, and Miss Elsie was her mother's own daughter.

The greetings of the season were exchanged, regrets at the Colonel's enforced absence politely expressed, accompanied with the hope that he might soon resume his place in society, and music, song and pleasant conversation, as friend met friend, made the hours pass swiftly.

Roger and Gray were late arrivals, for the former had not been able to banish from his mind the scenes which he had so recently witnessed, and his face was unusually grave and his manner preoccupied. He would have declined his invitation with a polite note of regret, for

he realized that his was no mood for society, but this was his first invitation to Colonel Lee's home since the rupture with that gentleman in October. He had been surprised to receive the card bearing Colonel and Mrs. Lee's compliments, and could scarcely believe it was intended for him, notwithstanding the address on the envelope, which was unmistakably his own.

Gray had said that he believed Lee was ashamed of himself, and willing to bury his ill-will, if Roger would make any advances so as to give him a chance; but Roger had made none, and could see no way in which he could, though he had been honestly seeking for an opportunity, for he had missed the pleasant evenings he had been wont to spend in Mrs. Lee's sitting room, and the intimacies which in even so brief a time had become established. He knew Mrs. Hardman longed to have Elsie at Elmcroft again, on the old familiar footing, and so he gladly welcomed this opportunity and made a determined effort to outwardly mask his inward disturbance.

His greeting from his hostess, who really liked the young man and sympathized with him in his efforts to keep Denwold on the old basis, and who, knowing her husband's irascible temper, had with her daughter vainly tried to placate the Colonel's wrath, eagerly grasped at this concession, and welcomed Roger with even more than her old cordiality, detaining him by her side as long as her duties would permit, as if anxious

to show her guests that he was high in her favor. When she was obliged to turn her attention elsewhere, Elsie whispered: "Father is in the library, and when you are tired of us, will be glad to see you—you know the way."

The surprise at this desire to meet him, on the part of his host, had the effect of banishing for a time his gloom; and he went about among the people, introducing Gray, who was known already to many by reputation, and chatting in his pleasant, entertaining fashion. Then, seeing his friend deeply interested, he commended him to Miss Lee's good offices, and taking advantage of a moment when observation was directed to another part of the room, stole across the wide hall and knocked softly at the well-remembered door.

Colonel Lee's "Come in!" was in exactly the same tone he had heard so often during his first months in Barham, and his greeting abated not one jot of its old-time cordiality. He bade him draw up an easy chair to the open fire, apologizing for not rising because of the rheumatism which confined him to his own chair and prevented him from mingling with the guests in the parlors. He seemed glad to see him, and plunged at once into a discussion of the weather, asked Roger's advice in regard to remedies for rheumatism, and inquired about the guests. A half-hour passed quickly, and when the young man arose to go his host accompanied his good-night with an earnest invitation to come again, saying:

"I shall have to stay in the house for some time yet, and you will be doing a good deed by wasting some of your spare moments on an old fellow like me. Don't stand on ceremony; you'll find me right here, and most of the time alone. By the way, there's that scrape of your Uncle Mark's I began to tell you about once when we were interrupted! Catharine didn't tell you all that other story either! Mark was in my regiment, and it was I who suggested him to General K—for that particular duty. Sit down again! It isn't late, and I know you don't care for the fuss and feathers in yonder! Sit down! I want to tell you of one of his most ridiculous adventures, one that concerned me too. Captain Morton, who was his captain, was talking it over with me only last week, down at Haver-town, where we happened to meet, and I never heard a man laugh as he did. He says that he sometimes wakes up in the night laughing, and that his wife used to be afraid he was going crazy, but now she has got used to it, and only asks him if he is dreaming about the 'Union pigs.' Sit down! Sit down!" he said, as he saw his companion's look of interest.

Dr. Ahlstrom was thoroughly pleased to find the Colonel so affable, and he was very anxious that he should retain his good humor; so, as the hour was not really late, and he felt sure Gray was too well acquainted with Mrs. Lee to feel any awkwardness at his desertion, he sat down again.

"You see, there wasn't a man in that whole regiment who did not know Lieutenant Varholm by sight or by reputation; and I doubt if there were many who hadn't spoken to him at one time or another, and called him by name. He was the life of the camp-fire, with his comical stories and his songs—he was a fine tenor singer—and many a time when the hospital was filled with the sick and wounded, moaning with pain, Mark Varholm's sweet tenor voice has quieted and soothed them with the sweet strains of the hymns and dear old songs they loved to hear at home. Not even the chaplain, and no better chaplain than ours ever breathed, could do for them what he could. I remember—but we won't talk of that to-night.

"Thirty years ago last fall we were in Virginia. The men were in unusually good spirits, believing that McClellan, whom they idolized to a man, was the Napoleon who would lead them to victory.

"Late in the afternoon of a glorious October day we received the news of a brilliant victory in the Southwest, and were jubilant. Some of the boys proposed celebrating that evening. As usual, Mark was one of the most enthusiastic when the matter was mentioned to him, and was full of ideas; though Lewis, who told me of it at the time, said that he made no offer of assistance beyond suggestions, but he thought when the fun began they should find him on hand.

"There was connected with Mark's company an old negro, black as ebony, but one of the brightest contrabands that ever ran away from a South Carolina plantation, who did the cooking for a squad of officers. He could make a toothsome morsel out of the merest nothing, and was devoted to the Lieutenant.

"As luck would have it, one of the pickets that night was Larry Murphy, a regular Irishman, who had, according to his own story, climbed to the top of the castle tower and kissed the Blarney stone more than once, and who had also, in consequence, a tongue as smooth as oil. He would have put his head into the cannon's mouth at the Lieutenant's wish, but was as stubborn as a Kentucky mule at any one else's commands, having more than once been put in the guard-house for contumacy, from which Mark's influence usually secured his release.

"About nine o'clock that night we heard a rifle shot in the direction of Larry's post, and anxiously waited for another, but none came; so we supposed that he had been disturbed by some animal, or, possibly, believing some person in his vicinity, he had challenged and then fired. The story we heard afterward, when the Irishman came into camp with a face as white as a sheet, and quivering all over with suppressed excitement.

"He had been at his post, pacing up and down, keeping a sharp lookout, and had grown quite accustomed to its loneliness, when suddenly

he saw just in front of him, and only a few feet away, a ghost. It was very large and came directly toward him. He wasn't frightened a bit, so he said, but looked straight at it and raised his gun, and then, just as he put his finger on the trigger, the devil came up behind the ghost and stood grinning at him. It was too big a story, the grinning, I mean, for the night was too dark to distinguish the outlines of a man's face at arm's length, let alone a ghost at a dozen paces; yet Larry insisted that it was the truth he was telling, and offered to kiss the Bible. He fired, and stood a moment looking; through the smoke he saw the ghost's head fall off and roll toward him, while the devil still stood looking over the headless trunk with that awful grin. He owned that he was scared then, and fell to the ground face down. When he gained courage to look about him both devil and ghost had disappeared, and he was alone. He neither saw nor heard anything unusual after that, but he told over his beads and said his paternosters as the priest had taught him when a lad at home in Killarney, until the relief came.

"I happened to be in Captain Morton's tent when Larry was telling his story, and chancing to look at Mark, who was also present, I was sure I detected a look of suppressed mirth on his face as he turned carelessly away, and felt sure that he knew more of the night's adventure than he cared to tell. I determined to keep a watch

on his movements, and a little before noon went over to his tent, carrying a letter which I had just received from home, intending to share what news it contained with him.

"He was glad to see me, and interested in the contents of my letter. After we had discussed the latter, he suddenly asked me to stay to dinner with him, saying Cuffee had promised him something extra, he didn't know what, but he did know Cuffee; and on the strength of his promise, had invited Major Boxford, Dr. Corr, Captains Morton and Starrett; and if I could so far compromise my dignity as to dine with my inferiors in rank, he would be very much gratified to receive also as a guest his colonel.

"It was n't just according to camp etiquette, but Mark and I were such old friends; besides, my curiosity was aroused, and I knew Cuffee's reputation, so I determined to stay.

"The table was set with the best the camp afforded, and the contents of a box received the day before by one of the guests added materially. There were some fine sweet potatoes roasted to a nicety, some boiled corn, and some corn cake, such as only an old plantation darkey knows how to make, and, for dessert, a dish of stewed prunes, some crackers, and a veritable bowl of punch; but the crowning glory of the feast was a dish of delicately cooked meat, carved so neatly, yet so arranged that one could not guess what form it had worn when living. I confess it was very good; I had tasted nothing so good for many a day! I asked Cuffee, when he waited

upon me, what it was; but the negro only rolled up the whites of his eyes the least bit and, pretending not to hear, went about his business.

"A messenger from headquarters came in search of me before we had finished the meal. He had with him a young white boy from a plantation up the river. This plantation had been, before the war, one of the finest in the Old Dominion, and its owner one of the most prominent men in the South. For a long time he wavered before casting in his lot with the people of his state, his conscience urging him to remain in the Union under the stars and stripes which had protected him so long, and in whose service he had won honor and fame; while his friends, and even his judgment, warned him that if he remained in his home he must join his neighbors and cast his fortunes with theirs. At last he joined the Confederacy, and was away in the Southwest, leaving his young son as the sole guardian of his mother and sisters.

"This plantation had suffered the fate of so many others. Its fields had been trampled down, its live stock, all but a small litter of pigs, a few chickens and an old horse, confiscated or sent away to supply the wants of the Confederate army; and seeing that so little remained, General McClellan, who had known the owner well, promised protection to this poor remnant on the usual condition that the family should give neither aid nor information to the rebels, and had sent orders to that effect to all the regimental headquarters.

"Three of the pigs had disappeared from what had been believed by the boy to be a secure retreat, during the night, and had evidently been stolen, since the most diligent search failed to reveal their whereabouts. In some roundabout way, I believe he told how, but I have forgotten, and it really doesn't matter, he heard that some pigs had been seen in a part of the camp belonging to my regiment, and he had come to me to seek some redress.

"I listened to him patiently, questioned him, and obtained all the information he was able to give; then I dismissed him, after promising that the offenders should be punished if caught, and went back to my dinner. After we had finished and lighted our cigars, which had been confiscated and were of the best, I ordered the negro into my presence, on the plea of praising him personally.

"He wore a timid, half-foolish look, which passed away as I praised his skill as purveyor and cook, and when he turned away, bowed low and pulled his forelock, mumbling that he was mighty glad to please 'Massa Kunnel.' Then I changed my voice, making it as gruff as I could, and demanded to know where he got those pigs. He was in a tight place, but a nigger can always turn himself, so he hung his head, looked down at my boots, then rolled up his eyes with a most innocent and injured expression on his black face.

"'How yo' know dem pigs, Massa Kunnel? Dey might be like nuff possums! How yo' know dem pigs an' not possums?'

"I know pigs, Sambo! We have them up North, and we eat them, too! You can't cheat me, you black rascal!"

"Eber eaten any so good, Massa Kunnel?"

"None any better; but what do you mean, you scoundrel? Tell me at once where you got them! Didn't I give strict orders that you should keep clear of the plantation up the river, and now you've stolen their pigs!"

"Yo' eat 'em, Massa Kunnel, an' yo' say dey good, berry good! Why yo' eat 'em ef dey be stole?"

"Now look here! your dinner was good, and you are a first-rate cook; but you must tell me at once, or I'll have you sent to the guard-house. Where did you get those pigs?"

"He didn't look toward Mark, who was shaking with repressed laughter, but I felt sure that he knew Mark would protect him, and that he wasn't much afraid of me.

"Well, Massa Kunnel, 'spose I mus' tell yo' all about 'em den. Yo' see, 'twas dis away. I went up de ribber to try gittin' some fish, but de fish would n' bite, 'spects dey was skeered, or sumpfin, an' I did n' git none, an' when I was a-comin' back wonerin' what I do to-day for dinner, I lay down my bag jes' a minit, an' mos' as soon as I do, I heerd a little noise, kin'er like a squeal, an' anoder, an' anoder, an' den I pick up de bag an' throw it ober my shoul'er, an' when I gits back an' op'n it an' look in, dere wuz tree leetle pigs, de cutest leetle tings yo' eber see, a-layin' close togedder inside. I 'spec's,

Massa Kunnel, dey was Union pigs, an' so dey tuk dat mefud to git away from de 'Secesh' an' inter our camp. Foh Gawd, Massa Kunnel, I don' tink nobody stole dem pigs! Massa Varholm, he ben berry good to me, an' I tole him dat I done hab sumpfin berry good for dinner to-day, an' he say, 'Guess it's possum, den,' an' I say mebbe, an' don' tell him no more.'

"Mark and the other officers could stand it no longer, but burst into a peal of laughter, in which I joined, and for a few minutes there was a regular roar, Cuffee meantime looking around, rolling the whites of his eyes, as if deprecating this sudden outburst and wondering at its cause. When at last he found breath, Mark told the nigger he might go, and the Colonel would have to forgive him this time, for he had never issued any orders to prevent the pigs from smuggling themselves into the Union lines, and he himself couldn't blame them for taking any method of getting away from the Confederates. He was sure we were all possessed of their sentiments.

"For months afterward the pigs that preferred the 'Yanks' to the 'Secesh' was a by-word; for the story was too good to be kept, and leaked out all over the camp, and Cuffee's reputation as the prince of liars was fully and firmly established.

"Some time after I discovered the truth of Larry Murphy's ghost and devil. He wasn't far wrong in his story, and, as I suspected, Mark and the nigger knew more about it than any-

body else. It seemed that Mark had planned the expedition after the pigs, and secured the assistance of Cuffee, and they left the camp in the midst of the jubilation over the victory I told you about, without being missed. Though the day had been fine, clouds came up about dusk, and the night grew rapidly dark, so that at eight o'clock it was impossible to see far ahead. Mark selected Larry as the picket he would pass, and knowing the Irishman's superstitious fears, he determined to have some sport.

"Finding a pumpkin of fair size in a field belonging to the plantation, he fashioned a jack-o'-lantern and secured a bit of punk wood inside; when they came close to Larry, Cuffee, who had the bag on his head, stood still in front of him, while Mark, who was a foot taller than the nigger, held the jack-o'-lantern with the lighted punk wood inside just above and back of the darkey's shoulder—you can imagine the rest."

Roger was laughing heartily when the Colonel finished his recital; for the moment he had forgotten all his perplexities, and the Colonel had forgotten his rheumatism, as he lived over the years so fraught with dangers and privations, but which were enlivened now and then by such droll incidents.

With a good-night and a promise to repeat his call, Roger went back across the hall with a smile on his face and a lighter heart than he had carried earlier in the evening. Many of the

guests had departed, and as he stood for an instant in the shade of the heavy draperies which partly covered the entrance to the parlor, he had an unobstructed view of a little group in which were Gray and Miss Lee. The former's face revealed to the friend, who knew him so well, the story which Roger had fancied he could read on the night when he gave him his confidence in his room at L—. Now he was sure he had read aright, and as he joined them his smile deepened. He had no fears for his friend, but would wait confidently, sure now that the sequel to that other would come in time, and that it would bring to his friend the peace and joy which he had so outspokenly envied.

CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the first three weeks in January Dr. Ahlstrom was busy with his affairs at the mills; but one day in the last week Sampson Cutter, the architect, received a message asking him to call at Elmcroft the next evening at eight o'clock for an important business consultation.

"Guess he's going to make some changes in the old house, or maybe build a new one. They say he and Miss Elsie, the Colonel's daughter, are pretty good friends. I rather thought it would be so, and a mighty good thing it'll be for him." A slight laugh escaped him, which ended in what sounded suspiciously like a sigh; for Mr. Sampson Cutter was believed to be himself very deeply interested in that young lady, and quite unwilling to take as final the answer she had given him.

"Don't know about that," said Joe Willoughby, who happened to be in the office, "but I heard he bought the old Pettigrew place last week. I've been wondering ever since what he meant to do with it. There's room enough to move the house back, and it would be a grand place for a handsome block."

"Oh, you may depend on it, Joe, it's the old house at Elmcroft he's going to fix, and there'll be a new mistress up there next summer."

"Maybe, maybe, I can't say, that is, about the new mistress, Samp; but it's the Pettigrew

place this time, or I ain't no good on a guess," and Willoughby shut the door behind him, and then opened it again far enough to put his head in, and said, "Don't forget, if it's to be brick I'll do it as cheap as anybody can afford to, an' I guess my work will stan'."

Cutter appeared promptly at the appointed time and was shown into the library at Elm-croft, where he found the Doctor, and with him Lawyer Gray of L—, whom he knew slightly. The Doctor requested him to take a chair at one side of the table, placing paper and pencils before him, while he and his friend seated themselves opposite. There was a long talk, to which the architect listened, his eyes opening wider and wider as the Doctor proceeded, and he turned in undisguised astonishment to Gray, as the latter offered suggestions or asked questions.

Finally he understood what was wanted and roughly sketched a plan which seemed to embody the ideas of the two men; this he explained to them, and after receiving more instructions and giving a pledge of secrecy, he was dismissed until such time as he could make a finished drawing and furnish accurate estimates for the intended building.

"Joe was right," he said to himself as he went down the avenue, "Joe was right! But, by Jove! what will he say when he knows what is to take the place of the Pettigrew house? I'd like to tell every one I meet, but—don't be a fool, Sampson Cutter!"

It had always been acknowledged in Barham and vicinity that Cutter was a first-class workman, who thoroughly understood his business and attended strictly to it; and now, after recovering from his astonishment, he went about his work with energy and interest, as well as with a methodical exactness that promised well for the result. It was several weeks before his plans were completed to his satisfaction, but when they were ready he sent a note to the Doctor, who requested him to bring them, on a certain date, to Elmcroft.

When the architect was ushered into the library on that evening he found, in addition to Dr. Ahlstrom and his friend Gray, two other gentlemen, the Rev. Burtis Brooke, rector of St. James's church, and Lawyer Dale. To these gentlemen he explained his plans in detail, and had the satisfaction of receiving some very gratifying compliments from all four on his really beautiful design, which seemed to carry out their ideas successfully; and when he went away he had a verbal understanding with the Doctor, which, a day or two later, was put into a written contract, to undertake the carrying out of his plans.

Joe Willoughby was a brick mason, and one of the best in the county, and the next morning after the conference at Elmcroft he received a message asking him to call at Cutter's office at his earliest convenience. The latter took him into his private room, and as soon as the door was closed behind him, exclaimed:

"You're in luck this time, Joe, sure, if you do the right thing! You guessed right, it is the old Pettigrew place, after all! Now, see here!" as Willoughby tried to speak, "don't you say 'I told you so!' for you didn't know anything more about it than I did. How Barham will stare when it wakes up one fine morning and sees an elegant brick building standing under those ancient elms! But it's to be a secret, not a whispered one either, Joe, and I must have your promise that no one shall worm it out of you, I mean about the details, man! Of course they can all see the outside, and they'll probably guess a hundred things, but you are not to help them in their attempts to gain information."

Then followed a long and earnest conversation, during which Joe expressed his surprise by remarks more forcible than elegant; he made a great many figures, and spent much time in calculating, and at last, seemingly satisfied, laid the paper upon which he had figured before Cutter and asked his opinion. After asking a few questions, the latter compared it closely with another which lay near his hand, and leaning back in his chair, said:

"You'll get it, fast enough! Come into the office to-night and talk it over with the Doctor. He's out of town to-day, but is coming in this evening; he is exceedingly anxious to have the whole thing settled, so we can begin on the foundations while this weather lasts, and then we can push things. Shake hands, Joe! and

don't say I never look out for my friends, and don't forget to come in about eight and see Dr. Ahlstrom."

In another week the old Pettigrew house was moved back to the rear of the lot, and the last of March, which was unusually mild, saw the excavation for the foundation of the new building in full progress.

The town people were much interested as they looked on and watched the workmen set the heavy derricks and begin to put in place the great granite blocks which heavy teams were constantly bringing from the quarry, about two miles away, and were as uneasy as Joe himself when a spell of weather interfered with the work. They questioned among themselves, and guessed this and that, but the Doctor was not a man easy to press for information, and Joe Willoughby's offhand manner and evasive answers only served to heighten their curiosity.

At last the outside walls, which were of Philadelphia pressed brick with granite trimmings, were raised three stories and a mansard roof added. A large circular tower rising above the roof and terminated by a slender finial was at the west corner of the front. A wide, handsome entrance in the center of the front opened into a large vestibule, from which a broad, easy flight of stairs led to the second story, where, when the finishing began, the principal interest of the onlookers seemed to center. It was easy to see that the lower floor was intended for two large

stores, and Joe readily admitted that such was to be their use.

Man after man climbed the broad staircase only to find himself in a large hall, from which heavy doors shut off his progress to the left, though he was welcome to penetrate elsewhere as he pleased. The space to the right was divided into small, comfortable rooms, singly and en suite, to be used as offices, which were the envy and admiration of the professional men of the town, and it looked as if they would quickly find tenants. On the third floor a large hall, with ante-rooms, a kitchen, and everything needful for entertainments of any kind, was to be fitted up, and the rooms in the roof had been leased by an organization of Odd Fellows, and were to be finished under their direction. But it was in vain to try to get any information in regard to that barred entrance out of Joe or his partner, who superintended the finishing; in vain to waylay the workmen, who either did not know, or told marvelous stories of marvelous doings, which no one credited.

At last, early in January, the entire building was finished and the keys handed over by Cutter to Dr. Ahlstrom. A few days afterward an item appeared in each of the local papers inviting the inhabitants of the town to an inspection of the new building the next evening.

This invitation was very generally accepted by the ladies as well as gentlemen, though few lingered long in the rooms which have been mentioned, the majority passing in and out, and

expressing in enthusiastic terms their opinion of their elegance and convenience. It was in the rooms on the second floor left, from which they had been so persistently shut out, that they were most interested, and many were the exclamations of wonder and admiration as one after another stepped through the wide doorway from the hall.

The floor was of oak, with a three-foot border of oak and walnut tiles set in diamond pattern; the walls above the oak and walnut wainscotting, which was four feet high, were painted a soft gray, with wide bands of bronze and gold, and bands of the same were about the ceiling; a large walnut bookcase had been built in the west end. The room was lighted by day by three large windows, each sash containing a single pane of plate glass, and by night by three bronze chandeliers of neat and tasteful design. A broad, arched opening in the west side communicated with the tower room, from which the main hall could be separated at will by very dark green draperies, bordered with bands of bronze and gold like those on the walls and ceiling. In this room was an oak desk, a table, and several substantial easy chairs cushioned with green leather; this room was also lighted by a chandelier similar to those in the larger room, and by long, narrow windows. A room in the rear of the larger one contained a fine billiard table and a pool table of the latest pattern, and through the half-open doors of a

large closet could be seen cribbage, checker, chess and backgammon outfits.

When the first exclamations had given place to the cheerful hum of conversation, Dr. Ahlstrom stepped upon a box which had been moved into the entrance to the tower room, and called the attention of the company.

He welcomed them cordially, expressed his gratification at seeing so many present, alluded to the curiosity which had been manifested in regard to the use which was to be made of the rooms in which they then were, and briefly sketched the incident which occurred on the last night of the old year. He told them of his determination then and there to put into execution a plan which he had been considering for some time, to see if he could not do something toward stemming the tide which threatened to carry so many frail barks out to sea and almost certain destruction. He did not mention the saloons as such, but referred to them only as places where men met men, not for their own betterment nor for the betterment of the town. He repeated, with a solemnity which impressed every one of his hearers, his belief that every man should be, not his brother's keeper, but his brother's helper, helping him to work out all the good that is in him, helping him to rise to a higher plane of thought and action, to become a better citizen, to be honored and trusted for himself. Then he rapidly outlined his intention, and requested the coöperation of the public.

The tower room and the room in the rear of the main hall spoke for themselves; the former contained all the necessary furniture for writing or study, and the other an equipment for recreation; the unfurnished room he would fit up for a reading room. In this room there would be the necessary tables and comfortable chairs, and he had made arrangements for four daily newspapers, six weeklies, including three illustrated, and six of the leading magazines. These papers and magazines represented no party or creed. The Republican would hobnob with its Democratic neighbor; the Catholic Review would hold its place beside Harper's and the Century. A soda fountain would be put in, and soda would be furnished at a minimum cost in the summer, and tea and coffee in the winter.

This work had been carried out for the men in his own employ, and he had intended to offer it to them alone as an experiment; but he had for the last few days been considering the idea on broader lines, and had decided to invite all the laboring men in Barham who would accept the offer to make use of the rooms.

For the next week but little else was talked of in the town and vicinity. Again and again, as friend met friend or acquaintances, or even strangers paused to look at the fine block standing so proudly on the street corner, they asked one another, "What do you think of it?" and of course every one had in mind the rooms in the second story left.

Colonel Lee characterized it as quixotic; Dale, who had been interested in seeing the handsome block as an ornament to the street, and who enjoyed the removal from his old close quarters to one of the front offices in the new building, which he had been quick to secure, looked upon it as a whim, but one which his client could afford to gratify, since he maintained that the stores, which were quickly leased for terms of five years, and the offices, which it seemed likely would always rent to advantage, and the lodge room, also under a lease, would pay expenses. Gray, who rode over to Barham while the excitement ran high, predicted that it would prove one of the greatest blessings the town had ever received.

Karlow, the proprietor of the largest saloon, held a consultation with his brother saloon-keepers, and though the result of the conference was not made public, it was noticed that attractions multiplied at their rooms, and that all these men wore a very supercilious smile when they passed the new building. It soon became evident that they were doing their best to counteract all Dr. Ahlstrom's efforts, and the latter felt that they were succeeding, for the saloons continued to receive more patronage than the new rooms. Many of the townspeople declared the Doctor would have his labor for his pains, and more than one repeated in his hearing the old saw about leading a horse to water. Though Roger smiled outwardly, there were

times when he quaked inwardly and was doubtful of his success, though Gray averred that he hadn't the slightest doubt, himself, as to the result.

True, a few men looked curiously in at the rooms, and a few went in to read the news; and these, finding it pleasant and comfortable, told their friends, and came again and again; but more and more were needed to make of it the success he wished and hoped for.

In perplexity, Roger went to Gray; but all he would say was, "Wait! Wait, man! Have patience! All things come round to him who will but wait."

Duncan, whose devotion to the new master of Denwold was as great as had been his devotion to the old, was a strong ally, and did much to turn attention to the new rooms.

"Come," said he, one evening, as they were going home from work, "Come, let's go up and see what's going on in the town! They say Karlow says he don't believe the boss'll make much out o' the thing—that whiskey an' beer's better than sody or anything over there, an' that a story from rattle-headed Tim Sprinter's better 'n all his books an' papers. I do' know but what 'tis for some folks, but 'taint for me; an', besides, I can't afford it. Some day or other I'll be too old for work, an' then Mary an' me'll buy a bit farm, like Smith's, an' we'll have a cow an' a horse an' a pig an' some hens, an' we'll jest settle down an' live comfortable.

"Did you know Norris lost his place along o' going to Burke's? Last night he got too much in him, an' him an' Tamworth got into a fight, an' Dennis was gitting the worst of it, when the cop from the Corners come along an' nabbed 'em both. I hear Denny got three months this mornin', an' Tam'worth thirty days."

About a dozen men followed Duncan's lead, and finding a dozen or more acquaintances, beside a few strangers who seemed glad to meet them, they made an evening of it, and reported to their comrades next day that they liked it and meant to go again that night, and invited them to go with them. In time it came to be a meeting place for a goodly number, though many still took the old paths and taunted those who did not with being afraid of the boss.

One of the young fellows, who had scoffed at Duncan's invitation and accused him of trying to "get solid" with the master, was unwise enough to indulge in too much of Karlow's beer, and came into the mill to work while under its influence. Dr. Ahlstrom happened to see him, and directed the foreman of the room to send him out until such time as he was sober, and then when he came in to send him to the office.

Bristow looked sheepish enough when confronted by the Doctor, and tried to make an apology, asserting what was strictly true, that it was the first time he had ever tried to work when he was the worse for liquor, though it was not the first time he had been unduly under

its influence, and he voluntarily promised that if the Doctor would take him back he would never get in that condition again.

Roger listened to him patiently and then explained to him the evil he was bringing on himself by persisting in the habit of drinking, even though he confined it to nights and holidays, and told him plainly that, while he was willing to allow him to return to work this time, if he repeated the offence he should summarily dismiss him. He said nothing of the rooms in the new building in the town, and did not rail against the saloons; and this very fact led Bristow to join Duncan and his friends in their next visit.

No disorderly conduct was tolerated in or around the Ahlstrom building, as it was called, and the neat and tasteful furnishings suggested neatness and care to the men. The janitor, James Geary, a veteran of the Civil War, who found himself at its close incapacitated for hard labor and almost entirely dependent on his small pension for support, was given the rental of the old house, which had been made snug and comfortable; and he took care to keep everything in shape, and by his pleasant greetings, cheery words and manner to interest the men, who found in his war stories, of which he never tired, a deeper interest than in any of the stories with which Tim Sprinter was accustomed to regale them.

One evening, after listening to a brilliant musical entertainment, it occurred to Dr. Ahlstrom that such music—no, not exactly such

music, for these men, as a whole, would not be able to appreciate Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert—but they probably loved music, and while they could not afford to pay the dollar which had been the price of his ticket, would enjoy something of the kind, and if they could bring their wives and daughters it would help to interest them in the new work.

"I'll try it," he said to himself. "It is worth all the trouble it will cost," he said to Miss Lee, to whom he went for assistance, sure of her active interest, and believing that her suggestions would furnish the needed supplement to his own, "and I am sure we can arrange something, at a very moderate price, which the people will enjoy, and which, I dare say, will please more fastidious tastes as well."

Miss Lee had been very outspoken in praise of the new undertaking, and was pleased to be allowed an opportunity to assist.

"Give me a day or two to think about it," she answered. "I know we can make out a program which will please all tastes, and I think I can secure assistance from some of the best talent in town, and perhaps your friend Mr. Gray will help us. I have heard that he is a fine baritone singer."

The result of the planning was one of the most enjoyable concerts of the season. Not only were those for whom it was intended delighted, but one of the best musical critics in the town, who was in the audience, declared it was the best amateur concert he had ever attended.

Gray was an enthusiast in political economy, having made a study of it in some of its phases, particularly in its bearings on labor and capital, and suggested to Roger that if the men cared to hear him he would like to talk to them.

The mill operatives all knew Gray as a friend of the Doctor, for they had seen him often at the village, and had heard Patrick speak of him, and were willing to listen to him out of courtesy, for the laboring man is not such a boor as he is often painted. Fortunately, aside from his interest in and familiarity with his topic, Gray was a fluent speaker, able to adapt himself perfectly to the intelligence of his hearers. It had been said of him that it was his very simplicity and thorough mastery of his subject which gave him the advantage he seldom failed to secure when before the courts. A jurymen once told one of Roger's friends, who reported it to him, that he had asked question after question in a case where Gray was counsel, which involved a good many technicalities supposed to be known only to those engaged in a similar business, and never once found the lawyer ignorant or misinformed.

This talk of Gray's gave the men something to think about; they liked it, and, through Roger, requested him to give them more along the same lines, assuring him of a larger audience.

The outcome was manifested in a visit made by a committee to Dr. Ahlstrom in his office a few days after the third of these talks. Ever

since they had listened to one of these addresses, a suggestion contained therein had appealed to them very strongly: namely, the saving of a small portion of their wages each week or month. These savings would not be large; in fact, for some of them with large families, they must of necessity be very small; they had thought them too small heretofore to be worth trying to save. But they knew by experience that there were times when sickness in the family made doctor's bills and medicines necessary, and beside, there were occasionally unexpected emergencies which demanded an extra dollar, so that it was close work to make the month's pay cover these needed additions to the regular expenses.

Gray had told them another thing, and they had sent two trusty men to investigate and had found it true; goods bought in large quantities were much cheaper than when bought in small quantities, and if they had the money they could join together and avail themselves of this method of saving, particularly in their groceries and fuel. They had thought of the savings bank, but they were not sure that it would take such small sums as some of them might wish to deposit; they had come to ask his advice now, and would carry back what he might say to those who had sent them.

Naturally Roger was much pleased, and promised to give the matter his immediate attention. He carried it to Dale and Gray for consideration,

and the former, who was one of the trustees of the Hookset Savings Bank in Barham, offered to lay it before the Board at their next meeting; and through Dale's influence, it was agreed to receive sums as small as one dollar, on a certificate, and when the amount reached five dollars to call in the certificate, enter the amount on a regular book, and put the money on interest. This was a most advanced step. If the men would save their money, they were in little danger from the temptations which men like Burke and Karlow sought to put in their way.

But Gray had conceived a new project. He was not quite satisfied; and on the evening of his last talk he said, as he finished, that he would like to meet them on Wednesday night of the next week, at half-past seven, sharp, to talk over in an informal way something which had presented itself to him since he began his talks to them.

"What is it now?" inquired the Doctor, as the two gentlemen stood at the door waiting for Gray's horse to be brought around.

"Oh! trust me, Roger, for once, without any reason! I am neither an anarchist nor a revolutionist, and shall neither advise nor sanction dynamite. Seriously, I have a plan for the union of these men for a better purpose than the Union so graphically described by Kateson at the trial. By the way, it was a great pity we did not get Vedder too. I read yesterday in a Chicago paper sent me an abstract of a speech the Dutchman

made before one of the labor organizations in that city. The fellow has a gift for oratory and a glib tongue which, if he had enlisted in a good cause, would have made him a power for good in the world; as it is, he will most likely bring up in the penitentiary in a few years."

CHAPTER XV.

DR. Ahlstrom was decidedly curious to know what new idea Gray had in his mind which he was unwilling to share with him; but as he trusted him implicitly he forbore to press the question, willing to bide the other's time for divulging it.

On Wednesday night it so happened that the Doctor was called out of town, much to his friend's delight; for though the latter had hinted as strongly as he could to Roger that his presence was neither necessary nor particularly desirable, he did not like to refuse him admission if he persisted in presenting himself.

When Gray arrived at the appointed hour he found the room well filled, and was exceedingly gratified with the friendly greetings which he received from most of the men. It showed that he had at least won their respect, and that they were willing to listen to whatever he might wish to say. He began his talk in a most informal manner; spoke of himself as a long-time friend of the Doctor, alluded to their life in college and to the assistance which the latter had rendered him, without which he would have found it difficult to have completed the course, and told them of the deep interest he had in his fellow-men, and of his desire to aid them in any and all ways, and of his willingness to sacrifice everything but principle in his efforts in their behalf.

"I am glad," said he, "that Dr. Ahlstrom is not here to-night; if he were I should not dare to say what I have, for no man so dislikes praise. He said to me, as we were talking over the strike last fall, when I was trying to dissuade him from a step which I knew would involve much trouble to him as well as expense, 'Gray, my wealth is not my own. It was left to me for a purpose, and that purpose is to help others to help themselves, and to help them to make better men and better citizens, so far as I can.'

"But I did not come here to-night to eulogize him; you know him too well to need any eulogy; yet I could not refrain from saying what I have, and I am glad that his absence made it easy. My purpose was altogether different, and it is only fair to say that I have not told the Doctor my reason for wishing to meet you, and I know that he has no idea of the plan which I have been considering. When it is all settled, that is, if you conclude to adopt it, you shall be the first to tell him of it and surprise him.

"I am almost, if not quite, as much interested in your success as the Doctor himself, and am quite as anxious to see Barham the model town of the state. To make it such requires the coöperation of the man who works with his hands for his daily bread, with the man who works with his brain for the same purpose, and the man whose money helps turn the wheels of action; and with these three forces combined wisely, success is assured. As individuals you and

I may do something, but organizations banded together can work more effectively and with better results.

"I have heard it whispered about the town, and the whisper has also reached my own city of L—, that the Doctor, that no man, has a right to prevent or forbid your going to the saloons; and I know that several of the proprietors of these places have joined in the issuing of a circular calling upon you to refuse to give up your manhood and to stand up for your rights. I also know that threats have been made to stop Dr. Ahlstrom where he is, or make him pay dearly for his rashness in interfering with their business, which is no interference whatever, except as his advice may induce you to refuse to waste your money for that which in no way benefits, but really injures you, and puts dollars in the pockets of these men, dollars which are needed by your wives and children, who must suffer, innocent as they are, because of your folly. Many of you have seen these circulars, for they are not private, and they are nothing that come within the limit of the law—I only wish they did. The threats are made in secret, and the men who have made them, if found out, can be severely dealt with. I think, however, there is another and a better course which we can follow, and one which will appeal to your reason and judgment; it was for this I wished to meet you.

"I wish to propose that you show these men how little you really think of their threats and

their circulars, and how little respect you have for them personally, and also that you come here because it is your pleasure to come; and for this purpose I suggest that you form yourselves into an organization, properly officered, with a constitution and by-laws for its proper government. As you know, an organization is a power, and the men belonging to it are bound together by a common interest; each is interested in the welfare of the others, and all are anxious to place it on a footing which shall command the respect of other organizations. By uniting together, you can easily obtain privileges which singly you could not hope for; you may, if you choose, secure masters in any course of study or work, either for yourselves or for your growing sons and daughters, and have at all times a place for social enjoyment and for entertainments of a reputable nature. I am willing to help you in any way that I can, and I only ask in return that you appoint Dr. Ahlstrom, who has certainly earned the privilege, an advisory board of one, to consult with you in all matters of importance which may come before the new organization.

"I don't know that I can say much more, except to emphasize the evils of the saloons, and you have all seen enough of those evils for yourselves to make any words of mine unnecessary. As I said only a few moments ago, every penny thrown into the tills of the men who keep them helps to make *them* richer and *you* poorer, and

to bring suffering and misery into your homes.

"Most of you know Jerry McNeil, who worked with you at the mills until the strike, and you remember that he swaggered around when they were reopened, declaring repeatedly that he wasn't fool enough to give up his liberty and accept the terms offered; he was too much of a man! So, with his hands in his empty pockets, he went around the town and the Corners, talking to all who would listen, while his young wife and baby were left day after day, for his money was soon gone, with only a few coals to keep them from freezing, and a scanty supply of food, which many times the neighbors helped to give them. You remember, he earned the name of 'Gentleman Jerry,' and it may be that some among you envied him. Last week he had delirium tremens, you know what that means, and in his fear at his supposed pursuers, ran after his wife with a knife. Poor Mary had the little one in her arms, and in trying to get out of his way, fell, and the doctors say the child may be crippled for life. Yesterday mother and child were to be sent to the almshouse, but Dr. Ahlstrom prevailed on the overseers of the poor to send them to the hospital instead, promising to pay the extra charges himself, while the doctors make whatever efforts they can to prevent the deformity which they fear will result from the fall. Meantime, Jerry is looking out between the bars of the county jail. I pity the poor wife, for I remember her as a sweet-faced girl,

with pleasant, ladylike manners, which made her the pet of all the boarders at the hotel in L—, where she waited upon the tables. We gave her, among us, a handsome present when she was married, and honest congratulations, for we all thought Jerry a nice, respectable young fellow.

“I cannot, and you ought not to, blame Dr. Ahlstrom for the stand he has taken at the mills—which is, I suppose, the real reason for the circulars and the threats—to discharge any and every man, no matter how good a workman he may be, who persists in drinking. He must do this for his own protection. You have all probably heard of the Liability Act, and that, in certain cases, a workman who is injured in the performance of his duties may bring suit against his employer through the courts and recover damages. Now a man may not be sufficiently under the influence of liquor to stagger, and yet his brain not be clear enough to induce him to take the precautions which he would if perfectly sober; and, if a man in such a condition were to be injured, even through his own carelessness, he might seek to recover, and while he might not succeed, he would at least make it uncomfortable and expensive for the employer.

“One other point, no man who indulges in liquor ought to be an officer in the organization which I have proposed, until such time as he has proved his power to overcome the habit. If there is the least chance for a man to reform, take him

in and help him all you can; don't bar him out because of his misfortune; but do not make him a law maker or a law enforcer for himself and others.

"Now, my friends, what do you say? Are my suggestions worth considering? What do *you* say, McCary? Let us have a full and free expression of opinion."

Tom McCary had lived in the little village for many years, and was a favorite with most of the employees at the mills. Gray knew by his face that he was deeply interested in what had been said, and that his comrades had been watching him closely. He was a cousin of Mary McNeil, and had more than once helped her when Jerry was idling around.

Tom straightened himself up, and looked about the room.

"You wants to know what Tom McCary thinks! Well, thin, it's ivery word throe you've heard this avening! You knows Jerry McNeil an' knows that he had a good home as iver man had, an' that Mary was a good wife to him, an' they had plinty to ate an' dhrink, an' to wear, an' there was money in the bank that Mary saved hersilf afore she married Jerry, beside what she helped him save afterward whin he wurked in the mills. He was a good wurker, too, an' might ha' had his place this day, only that he tuk to goin' roun' wid Vedder an' Kate-son an' the loike o' thim that made him think he was badly used by the master, an' thin he

began goin' to Burke's of an avenin' instid o' goin' home, an' he wint to the bad. Many's the time I have talked to him, an' Mary's bin down on her knees to him, an' begged him to give up the dhrink an' go to wurk somewhere; but he cursed her ag'in an' ag'in, said he was as good as the boss, an' could git his livin' widout slavin' an' hung roun' Baxter's doin' o' odd jobs, an' pickin' up a pinny now an' thin, but niver a one did he iver carry home, an' poor Mary a-wastin to a shadder a-takin' in washin', an' us a-hilpin' her all we could, an' I know more nor onct, when Dr. Ahlstrom, an' Mr. Gray, too, has sint her money. She tol' me of it hersilf, man!" he said, looking at Gray.

"I know how 'tis, for I ha' taken a dhrup mesilf now an' thin in me time. It's hard to say 'no,' whin the bhoys do be askin' you to threat, an' be a-laughin' an' pokin' fun at ye, an' ye loikes to be called a good feller, so if yez ha' a cint in your pocket ye takes it out, an' whin it's onct gone ye can't git it agin, bad as ye may need it, an' ye can't git another dhrink aither, 'less you borries the price o' it, an' sure if ye ain't there nobody can threat ye, an' I'll jist stay out, an' there'll be more pennies for the wife an' chillern."

"Well, Burswell, it's your turn next," and Gray turned suddenly to the middle-aged Englishman just back of him.

Burswell's face was a study, and Gray expected something disagreeable, but he wanted to give those who were opposed to him a chance as well

as those who agreed. This man had been brought up in the mills in England, where his father and his grandfather had worked all their lives. He drank his beer and even stronger drinks when he liked, and if it had not been for his fear of losing his place would have been brutal in his dealings with his fellow workmen; instead he was sullen and rough, and generally avoided by the better class among them. He was disposed to be insolent now, as Gray surmised, when addressed so abruptly.

"What's a man to do! He works hard his ten hours in the day, an' it's little enough he gits for wages to take care of hisself an' wife an' young uns, an' whin he wants a drop o' comfort, or a drop for his fr'en's, it's such as you, with plenty o' money in your pockets, an' not much to do, as comes along an' swears he sha'n't have it! It ain't for you or the likes o' you to tell us uns what we'll take an' what we won't! What does you, an' such as you, care for us? You wants our work, an' you're boun' to ha' it, an' that's where you gits your money!"

Cries of "For shame! For shame, Joe Burswell!" "Keep a civil tongue in your head!" "Don't mind him, sir!" were heard from all parts of the room, and though Gray grew white around the lips, he managed to control himself.

"Let him talk, he may feel better when he has had his say."

"I hain't got nothin' more to say, only you needn't try to 'sof' sodder' me. I'm as good as anybody in Denwol', an' Dan Burke's place is

good 'nuff for me; an' so long as I has a cent to buy it for meself or to treat my fr'en's I'll be boun' to do it; but you nor the master needn' fear; I'll not git into trouble as long as I stay, an' I've niver been inside when I couldn' min' meself, an' I knows me business, an' don' need anybody to tell it me."

One or two of the men encouraged the Englishman—under their breath—but the large majority were indignant. One Whitworth, who had been a good friend to Joe for years, shook his fist in the latter's face.

"It's ashamed o' you I am, Joe Burswell, an' me a-stan'in' your friend all these years an' beggin' the master to keep you, an' him that good to you as he has been. So you'll have the beer an' whiskey, will ye? See what it has done for you, thin! You an' me come over in the same steamer, an' we hired to Mr. Varholm the same day, fifteen year ago, an' you had twinty cints more a day nor me, an' it was all right, for I knew very well you were the better workman, but I got up even with you after a while. You drank your beer an' whiskey, an' I didn't, leastwise not very often, an' what ha' you got to show for your work, man? I owns my house where I lives, an' a good bit o' garden along with it—many a basket full have you had from it—an' my five childern has all been to school, an' the oldest two has had extra teachin' beside, so the boy has a good place in the market, an' Alice is doing well at her trade; and I'm think-

ing the others'll git their turn whin they're old enough. What'll you say for yourself, man? I hopes you'll excuse him, Mr. Gray, an' say nothin' of it all to the master. Joe'll be ashamed o' hisself, that he will, afore this time to-morrow night! An' Maggie Burswell an' the childern are as decent as any in Denwol', ay, or in Barham either!"

"Well, I'll leave it with you, men, to say what you want to do; you can think it over, and when you have decided, Whitworth here can send me word through the post-office, or he can use the telephone in the office and talk to me if he wishes. You can ask me any questions which come to you now, and I'll answer as well as I can. I shall be glad to help or advise you, and I am sure such an organization can be formed as will be a benefit to every one of its members. We may in time be able to introduce a regular benefit association, which some among you might like to join, which would be a help to you in case of sickness or accident, or a gift to your wife in case of your removal by death, and such a feature need not be a burden to any one of you, but of course that is a matter we can arrange for later."

The men crowded around him as he rose to go, asking questions, and their anxious, interested faces showed that all had been impressed by his words and his suggestions.

"Come over Tuesday night an' ye can," said Bentley, who had not spoken before, except to

cry shame to Joe Burswell's impudent speech. "Come over Tuesday night, an' we'll be ready with the names of our officers, an' organize. We don't know much about a constitootion an' by-laws, but if you would make one for us you might bring it, an' we'd know if we liked it an' was willin' to live up to it. We'd like to begin fair an' have everything reg'lar, an' I don't know why it would n' be as good for us as them above stairs, or the 'Knights of Honor,' or anything of that kind. We'll make it go, sir, an' many thanks to you for the talk we've heard this night. We'll never forgit you or the Doctor, an' it's glad we'll be, an' proud, too, to have him for any kind of an officer, if you think as how he'd like to be one of us."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "Ahlstrom Building" was opened to the public in January, and in the second week of the following April the "Barham Working Men's League"—the name chosen by the members forming it—was organized.

This organization had for its objects, as was clearly set forth in the very simple constitution adopted, first, the welfare of its members; second, the welfare of the town; and third, it pledged its aid and encouragement to all enterprises which tended toward the public good, wherever its influence could reach. It was non-sectarian in creed, and the members might be of what political faith they chose. Moreover, it was not to be limited to the employees at Denwold, but was open to any man in Barham who was acceptable to a membership committee of eight, of which Dr. Ahlstrom was one, and who was willing to subscribe to its constitution and the by-laws governing its management.

These by-laws were very carefully considered by Gray, very clearly explained by him at a meeting called for the purpose, and the men given a chance to think them over for several days. Several changes were made at their suggestion, for, having no fear of the Doctor, and encouraged by Gray, they gave free expression to their ideas, which the lawyer not only ac-

knowledgeed to be good, but to which he accorded generous praise; and while they were not offensive to any man in sympathy with the constitution, they were somewhat stringent on one or two points which seemed to antagonize men like Joe Burswell.

No man was shut out of the organization who was decent and respectable, but no man was admitted who would not pledge himself to live up to the requirements, which he was expected to do before his application for membership was acted upon.

That the organization was recognized as a good thing for those who joined was apparent, when seventy-five men signed as charter members; men from all over the city, though of course a majority were from the Denwold Mills. Robert Duncan—we must call him by his full name now—of whose interest in the formation of the League every member knew, and who was trusted and respected for his sturdy Scotch honesty, was chosen president, John Whitworth was vice-president, and a young machinist, David Adams by name, from the center of the town, was secretary; Dr. Ahlstrom was unanimously chosen treasurer, and very willingly consented to serve in that capacity, while the directors were divided among the mills and the shops, so it could not be said that Denwold made any effort to monopolize the offices.

Perhaps one of the pleasantest, most gratifying incidents of the first meeting held by the new

League was the reading of a number of congratulatory letters which had been received by the secretary from the older organizations in town, even the most aristocratic "New Era" club, which extended a warm recognition and good wishes for this, the latest comer among them. These welcomes and congratulations cost nothing, but they aroused a feeling of self-respect and pride which added to the manliness and earnestness of the workingmen, and made—so it was whispered—membership in the League even more desirable than before they were received.

Dr. Ahlstrom was surprised to receive a gift for the new club, not long after its first meeting, of a check for a considerable sum of money, which accompanied a very brief letter setting forth the writer's interest in what she understood to be the aim of the new organization, namely, the elevation and dignity of labor, of which she had heard through their mutual friends, the Rev. Mr. Brooke of St. James's, and Miss Lee. If no immediate need required the expenditure of the money, she suggested that it might be used in providing books of reference, which in time some of the more skilful workmen would be glad to consult, and in forming the nucleus of a library containing books of interest to their wives and children as well as to themselves. It was signed "Mrs. Anna Dolph."

Dr. Ahlstrom had known Mrs. Dolph by name ever since coming to Barham, and her tall, slender figure was as familiar as that of any lady

in the town, but he had never fully seen her face; only once had he caught a glimpse of dark brown eyes and curling brown hair, when the heavy mourning veil which she constantly wore was so quickly interposed that he was never sure his eyes had not deceived him.

He knew she lived at Sunnyside, a beautiful estate in the suburbs of the city; but Sunnyside and its master, Mr. Septimus Whittemore, who was, so rumor said, uncle to Mrs. Dolph, were not much better known to the people of the town than the lady herself; for although scarcely a person passed the entrance to the beautiful grounds who did not pause to look at so much of them as could be seen from the highway, few had been invited to go in through the wide gate which opened upon a broad avenue leading to a large, handsome cottage at its head, and fewer still had been admitted through the heavy doors into the house itself; but these few never tired of repeating the wonders to be seen in its spacious rooms.

There was a rare collection of curiosities which had been gathered from many parts of the world. In its library was a large collection of books which were the especial pride of their owner; some, gifts of the authors themselves, bearing their names and compliments in their own handwriting; some in choice bindings, illustrated with photographs, etchings, or exquisite water color sketches of great value. Fine paintings, several among them by old masters, hung upon the walls; a few antique bronzes and mar-

bles were here and there, and in the cupboards was a priceless collection of rare china and old silver that would have made a collector, unless he was more than mortal, forget the tenth commandment every time the door was opened.

Within the grounds were greenhouses in which tropical fruits and flowers were grown in almost their native luxuriance, and native flowers and fruits in and out of season.

The people in the town were accustomed to speak of the owner of all this magnificence as "Old Septimus," though he was not old, certainly not yet sixty, and strong and vigorous, with a physique an athlete might envy.

Whence he had come to Barham no one knew, and why he had chosen to make his home here was equally a mystery. The property he now owned had been on the market for a long time without finding a purchaser, though it was an excellent farm; but its distance from town, and the money required to put the buildings, which were much run down, in good condition, did not make it particularly desirable, and Mr. Whittemore secured it at a very reasonable price.

As usual, people began to wonder what would be done with it, but their wonder was short lived; for one bright morning, about three weeks after Mr. Whittemore received the deed, he reappeared with a small army of workmen, builders, gardeners, and the like, who in time wrought a wonderful transformation, so that a very common, uninteresting farm became a veritable Garden of Eden.

For nearly three years its owner lived in the handsome new cottage, with only his housekeeper, an elderly woman whose trim Quaker dress and precise speech, the accompaniments of a dignified, graceful bearing, made her a prominent figure whenever and wherever she appeared, and a maid servant. The coachman and the gardeners, who were English, found homes near by.

One winter day, near the close of the third year, a visitor, the first to come to the cottage, appeared. She, for it was a woman, came from Monckton, a station ten miles away, in the Sunnyside sleigh, which had been sent to meet her, and evidently intended to remain some time, judging from the trunks and boxes that were brought the next day.

In the three years since her coming Mrs. Dolph, the name by which the visitor was known, had made very few acquaintances, and these were nearly all members of St. James's church, at which she was a regular attendant, contributing generously to its finances. Mr. Whittemore, on the contrary, had never entered the church, and had usually contrived to avoid the rector when he made his parish calls at the house, though it was not known that he ever objected to them, or to the fruit and flowers sent out in the name of Elizabeth Turner, the housekeeper, to the sick and poor in the parish.

A number of the parishioners had called, they said, through friendly interest; more likely, Mr. Whittemore thought, through friendly curiosity;

and though Mrs. Turner received them in her own private sitting-room, and treated them very courteously, only three were admitted to the presence of Mrs. Dolph, or urged to repeat their calls. Of these, Miss Lee was one, and though her calls were never returned, both uncle and niece were most cordial, and she was urged to allow them to assist in her many acts of charity.

It was late in the winter after Dr. Ahlstrom came to Barham that old Mrs. Bristow, whose son received the severe reprimand for his evil habits, was taken sick. She grew rapidly worse, and grave fears for her recovery were entertained by her physician. One morning Dr. Welles said that if she could have some grapes she might retain them on her stomach, which had rejected everything else he had tried, and Miss Lee went over the town, but could find none. She knew that the grape house and the cold storage at Sunnyside were seldom both empty at the same time, and recalling the many offers of assistance she had received, determined to ride over and ask for some for her poor friend.

The great St. Bernard dog which had the range of the grounds day and night, keeping away all would-be intruders, was less friendly to Elsie than his master, and she could not coax him to let her pass, so that she began to fear she would have to return without the coveted fruit. Suddenly a voice in sharp, authoritative tones commanded the creature to be quiet and the great brute slunk away as Mr. Whittemore

came into sight. He apologized for the fright Elsie had received, listened to her request, and invited her to go with him to the grape houses, where the fruit was just beginning to ripen.

For some reason the master of Sunnyside seemed more genial than usual, and he took Elsie first into the rose house, where a dozen varieties of that queen of flowers were in bud and blossom, and cutting them with a lavish hand gave them to the gardener to pack, that they might not be chilled by the cold winter air. Then he begged that she would step in and see the plants which were natives of cold, northern countries, with which he had been experimenting, and had finally succeeded in bringing, if not to perfection, to a fairly representative condition, very gratifying to him. It was certainly a triumph to be able to point to several beautiful edelweiss blossoms, to mountain violets, and to the unfolding fronds of some of the rare and delicate mountain ferns. Mr. Whittemore was, when he chose, a most interesting talker. He had studied these plants in their native haunts, and now gave his companion much interesting information in regard to them and the countries in which they grew.

They came out of this house in the rear of the cottage, and Elsie started, and a shiver crept through her whole frame, as she heard the deep, almost unearthly wailing of the large organ in the music room—a fine instrument which was put in just before Mrs. Dolph's arrival—and in

spite of the terror that seized her she recognized the fact that a musician of more than average ability was fingering its keys. She turned to look at Mr. Whittemore, on whose dark face a frown had gathered, chasing away the smile which had rested there but a moment before.

"Poor Anna!" he said, seeing the disturbance in Miss Lee's manner, and recovering by an effort his own self-possession, "it 'is one of her anniversaries—if only—" and he stopped short. "You will come and see her as often as you can, will you not? She likes to meet you, and I think your cheery words and smiles help her to master the evil genius which seems to follow her. She is innocent of any wrong herself, poor girl, and yet she has suffered and still suffers deeply for the wrong-doing of others who should have shielded and protected her from every care. No, not to-day," he said quickly, seeing Elsie hesitate, "not in her present mood, she could not bear it, but by and by, when it has passed."

He assisted her into the sleigh, gave her the box of beautiful roses and another of grapes, and as he tucked the robes about her, said:

"We are what we are, my niece and I, Miss Lee, through circumstances! Circumstances which it is neither wise nor easy to explain, but I trust you will not be frightened, but allow your kindness of heart to cover what may seem mysterious. To my niece gossip is intolerable, and while we both know that our exclusiveness furnishes material for a good deal of speculation,

we are not willing to proclaim our peculiar circumstances from the housetop to delight a curious crowd. I hope, indeed, that a change is coming, and that Anna will be able to leave the seclusion in which she has lived so long. Before that she enjoyed society and was herself one of its brightest ornaments, tenderly cared for by her father, who idolized and petted her, the only child of his declining years, and gave her every advantage that his money and social standing could procure."

Good Dr. Welles had been outspoken in his denunciation of men—namely Mr. Septimus Whittemore, and others of his kind—who shut themselves up with an air of mystery, a refined selfishness, he called it, in a beautiful home, out of whose enjoyment all others were barred; but he took the grapes with a thankful heart, and was happy in seeing the good they did his patient. Next morning, when a box of strawberries, packed in their own green leaves, and accompanied by some lovely violets, were left at Mrs. Bristow's door by Mr. Whittemore's man while the doctor was making his morning call, the latter reluctantly admitted that perhaps after all such people did do some good in the world, and were not as selfish as they seemed; and the mill people who were very fond of "Mother Bristow," as they called her, changed their grumbling to praises, and thereafter the name of Mr. Septimus was spoken more respectfully at Denwold.

Dr. Ahlstrom attended services at St. James's, and Sunday after Sunday, as the mistress of Sunnyside walked down the aisle in the handsome audience room of this fine old church, he looked wonderingly at her. There was something about the slender, black-draped form that reminded him of other days and far different scenes; and the voice of the good rector had a far-off sound, and gradually failed altogether at times as he allowed his thoughts to have full sway, and pictured to himself the great city of Vienna. Again he was walking through those well-remembered streets, wending his way to the Baron Hotstenberger's, whose beautiful American wife gathered in her magnificent salon the beauty and wealth of the city. Among those fair faces one stood out with wonderful distinctness. It was that of a beautiful young girl, a near relative of the hostess, who was spending some months in the study of music. She charmed all who met her, while she repelled all familiarity by her quiet dignity, which brooked no nearer approach than courtesy alone would warrant. He remembered how his friend, Hugh Wortley, a young Englishman of excellent family, raved over her day after day, and how finally he determined to offer his hand—she was already the sole possessor of his heart—when he should finish his medical studies.

Would he ever forget the night when poor Hugh, with hope beaming in his eyes, came in to tell him of Miss H——'s promise to receive

him that evening? He was dressed with unusual care, and as he went out of the room said with a note of exultation in his voice which the Doctor could hear even now:

"Wish me well, old fellow, to-night will decide my fate for time and all eternity!"

Scarcely an hour later the young man came into the club room in high spirits and kept the company in an uproar until a late hour. Then, in the midst of a German drinking song, he fell into a heavy drunken stupor, and was carried by his comrades to his room, where for two weeks he hovered between life and death. During his delirium Roger, who took upon himself the task of nursing him, heard a part of the story of that fateful night, and received in confidence the rest after his friend's convalescence. The sequel was learned a few weeks afterward, when the public announcement of the betrothal of the beautiful young American to Count Von Arnheim, a friend of the Baron, was made.

This had happened so long ago! so it seemed to him now, and he had seldom thought of it since except to wonder what had become of Hugh Wortley, who, he had heard, had given up his medical profession and taken holy orders. He knew that the wedding of Count Von Arnheim had been solemnized in the great cathedral, and the paper, which a friend had sent him, was full of the festivities accompanying it; of the beauty of the bride in her magnificent robes and jewels, and of the dashing Count in his brilliant uniform, with his many decora-

tions. It was Mrs. Dolph who brought this romance back to him now, and he could not shake off the feeling that in some way she was connected with it.

Roger said to himself that if he could only see her face, doubtless that would banish all these old memories; but her veil never seemed so closely drawn as when she was about to meet or pass him. He thought he could, perhaps, call and thank her for her liberal gift to the "League;" but the great dog refused him permission to enter, and as no one came to his assistance he was obliged to retrace his steps without achieving his wish.

If he had had sharper eyes he might have seen the person he was seeking standing at an upper window with an opera glass in her hand, overlooking the scene; but he did not, nor could he see the bitter smile which curved her lips, or hear the shrieking and the wailing of the organ, which old Tom, the Scotch gardener, declared was enough to drive a man crazy, as he stuffed cotton into his ears to shut out the sound.

"She's mad! Mad as a March hare! bless her pretty face! The Lord knows what awful thing she has ever done that she finds need of that." But some hours afterward, when she went into the greenhouse to beg of him, in her bright, pleasant way, some lilies and roses for her vases, and stopped to chat a few moments, he forgot all about the morning's occurrence and was ready to fall at her feet.

With Mr. Whittemore Dr. Ahlstrom had formed a slight acquaintance, limited to a bow and a pleasant salutation when they met. Nevertheless, he was more surprised than he was at the receipt of Mrs. Dolph's check to receive by the hand of a messenger, one morning when he was busy at his office, a note begging him to accompany the bearer, a servant from Sunnyside, to the latter place at once on urgent business. With a feeling of wonder at so peremptory a request, nay, rather command, he obeyed, after learning that a gentleman whose name the servant did not know had been summoned by telegraph, and had arrived at the house a few moments before he was sent to Denwold, and that the horse which the stranger had ridden had been stabled as if for a long visit.

The Doctor was evidently expected, for as the sleigh dashed up the avenue, the door of the cottage was opened by the master himself, who cordially greeted the guest he had so unceremoniously bidden; and while the latter was removing his overcoat and hat, apologized for the abruptness of his request. Another hat and a short military cloak and riding whip, which he recognized as Gray's, lay upon a table, and the mystery deepened.

When ready, Roger was ushered by his host into a small room fitted up as a lady's sitting room, opening out of the library. The only occupant of this room came forward to meet him as he entered. Such a vision of womanly

beauty he had seldom seen, and stepping forward he suddenly paused. His beautiful hostess did the same, and they stood facing each other. The man seemed to be more amazed than the woman, but regaining his self-possession by a visible effort he pronounced a name never before heard in those apartments:

"Countess Von Arnheim!"

The lady was evidently not surprised, "had been expecting it," as she said in a most musical voice.

"I am glad, Doctor, that you have not forgotten our former acquaintance. I hope I see you well. The master of Denwold has been often in my thoughts, as I have seen the good he has accomplished and is still striving to accomplish, and I have been proud of our acquaintance, even though it has seemed best to keep my veil between us."

After the almost spasmodic pronunciation of her name Roger had not spoken, and seeing that he was still bewildered, the lady signed to a gentleman who had been hidden from sight by the heavy portière against which he stood, in the adjoining room.

"My lawyer, Mr. Gray, who is, I believe, a friend of yours."

Then, with a face from which the smile suddenly departed, leaving the mournful look of which those who had met her always spoke, she said to the lawyer:

"Are you satisfied, quite satisfied of my identity, sir?"

"What does it mean? Why have you brought me here?"

"Excuse me, Doctor, and please be seated. Be seated, Mr. Gray. It is my place to explain, I do not forget, and my explanation will be somewhat long."

CHAPTER XVII.

TO go back to the time when we first met, Doctor. You, a student of medicine, having from your position as your father's son the entrée to the best society in Vienna, and I, by virtue of my cousin's rank as baroness of the Empire, the same right, were thrown together, and I think grew to like one another in a way.

"I was often homesick, and though you generally spoke German, you did sometimes, when we were not in the midst of the whirling crowd but seated in some cozy corner of the American minister's beautiful rooms, or in my cousin's salon, talk to me in English. You and your friend Hugh Wortley were the only ones who could.

"Poor Hugh! I have often pitied the infatuation which made him, instead of my friend, my lover; but I assure you now, as I did that last night at the Baron Von Peiffner's, that I was guiltless of any intention of leading him into even a flirtation. I had long before made up my mind to wed a title, as my cousin Elizabeth had done, and met all attempts to dissuade me by pointing to her happiness, assuring those interested that she found her jeweled coronet no heavier than a wreath of American roses.

"My mother, who died when I was fifteen years old, left me a large fortune which was to

come under my absolute control on my twenty-first birthday. Its income allowed me every luxury my heart could desire, and made me sole mistress of my actions.

"My cousin Elizabeth, who was a dozen years older, had always made a pet of me, and when she urged me to come to her, pointing out the advantages I could gain in my musical studies in the Austrian capital, I hastened to win my father's consent to the arrangement, and coaxed him to accompany me abroad. He had been contemplating a tour upon the Continent for some time, and together we traveled through France, Switzerland, Italy and Greece, finally reaching Vienna. Elizabeth and her husband received us very cordially and introduced us at once into the whirl of society.

"We had been in the city only about two months when my father received a cablegram recalling him to America. With reluctance, yielding only to Elizabeth's persistent entreaties, he left me behind, promising to return the next autumn. Before that time a dispatch from his lawyer announced his death in Philadelphia, which was our home, of typhoid fever.

"For a time I was inconsolable. I reproached myself with my heartlessness in letting him go without me, and determined to start for home at once. Baron Hotstenberger, however, declared it was not safe for me to travel alone, and after a while he and Elizabeth together persuaded me that, as I had no relatives in America nearer

than uncles and cousins, I had better remain with them for a time at least, and put my father's business affairs into the hands of his lawyer for settlement.

"In due course of time letters came and went, and I discovered that I had no voice in the disposal of the property which had belonged to my father. Afraid that the glamour of a title would lead me to abandon my own country and accept the hand and debts of some impecunious nobleman, he had left every dollar tied up so closely in trust funds that I could control nothing but the income; but that, with the income from my mother's estate, gave me a yearly revenue a princess might envy.

"Then I met Count Von Arnheim. You, who knew him, though only slightly, must remember his courtly grace and brilliant conversational powers. You will recall also that he was high in favor at both the Austrian and the Prussian courts. I was foolish enough to be flattered by his marked attentions at my first court ball, and when he followed them with flowers and books and sought me repeatedly in my cousin's home I was thoroughly happy. After a time, he asked me to be his wife. Remembering how I had been warned, I was simple enough to tell him of the warning and to demand if he were thinking of my money.

"I shall never forget how emphatically he denied anything of the kind. He protested that they were all wrong who would try to make

me believe that of him; that perhaps some foreigners of rank might be guilty, but that it was only his brown-eyed darling for whom he cared and not her money; he was glad that was all settled on herself; he had enough of his own; and I, simpleton that I was, believed every word, in spite of the occasional rumors that reached my ears of his fast career that had wasted a large fortune, leaving little but the entailed estates. I have since learned, and from him, what I would not believe before, that rich American girls are considered legitimate prey for any impetuous noblemen who can ensnare them in their nets, and that they are rarely sought by any other.

"Elizabeth might have influenced me had she tried, I think, but the Count was her husband's friend and the latter anxiously desired the alliance, believing that with my beauty and wealth I could win him from his former habits, which were, after all, only those of the spoiled, petted sons of nobility—no worse, certainly.

"We were married in the great cathedral, amid the blaze of lights, the flash of jewels, and the fragrance of flowers. The papers were full of it, the dresses, the guests, the reception in the beautiful palace of the Hotstenbergers, and the wedding gifts, which included some magnificent jewels from royalty itself.

"We went to Italy for the honeymoon, spending days and weeks in its fine old cities, especially in Rome, Venice and Florence, and I was intensely

happy. Then we went back to Vienna and were feasted and fêted, and at last went to the stately old castle on the vast estate of the Von Arnheim family, at some distance from the city.

"This estate was one of the finest in the country, with great forests, parks, hills and dales, crystal lakes and clear, limpid brooks. Nature had done her utmost to beautify the place, and the art of man had supplemented her with more wisdom than it usually does; but with all that it was solitary, for, except for the servants and the tenantry, our nearest neighbors were miles away, over steep and rugged mountain roads.

"After a time my husband began to tire of its solitude, and to be gone day after day with his friends, hunting or indulging in amusements which suited his mood, leaving me to my own devices. Fortunately I possessed a keen appreciation for nature, and was able to enjoy the beauties of the place; moreover, I felt in my heart a new and strange happiness, the joy of coming motherhood, as I waited for the advent of the little stranger whose coming I was sure would hold my husband closer to his home and wife.

"For some months my income, or the larger part of it, had been brought to me by my husband, who received it from the banker in the city. The amounts he handed to me were unusually small; if I spoke of that, he invariably had an answer ready that disarmed my suspi-

cions, if, indeed, I indulged in any; sometimes it was due to a depreciation in stocks, sometimes he retained it for me lest it should be too much of a care, since in my condition I could not use it. I believed every word of it then; afterward I knew that it went to pay his gaming debts, for he was an inveterate gambler.

"My babe was born—my beautiful boy—and amid much pomp and ceremony, in the presence of the nobility from the castles for miles around, it was christened by the old priest who had christened two generations of Von Arnheims before, with the family name, Franz Joseph Hartzweig Adolph Von Arnheim.

"The Count remained at home for a time, while the feasting and merriment were kept up on the estate; but after a while he tired even of his infant son, of whom I knew he was proud. Another peculiarity I learned concerning him at this time was his absolute need of novelty and excitement, a need which some women might have been able to supply, but which I, with my temperament and inexperience, could not. With many protestations of regret at leaving me behind at the castle, where, however, I was determined to stay, and vows of undying love, he went down to Vienna.

"He was gone three months, but in the letters which came each week he wrote that he was sorry to stay away from me so long, but his duties at court compelled him to remain. I hoped that when he returned he would bring cousin Elizabeth, to whom I was anxious to

show my boy, who absorbed my every thought. When he came, however, he was alone, Elizabeth would perhaps come later.

"I was so glad to see him that I forgot all about my quarterly payment from my father's estate for a time. When I spoke of it, he carelessly told me he needed it to use more than I did, and didn't suppose it would make any difference to me; but if he'd thought I'd have put on such a long face, he'd have borrowed it from some of his friends. From that time he went about with an injured air that made me almost glad when he received a letter which he said obliged him to return to the city.

"One day I received a copy of a newspaper in which I learned the truth of his trips to the city. It was a harsh awakening. Count Von Arnheim's name was coupled with that of a famous prima donna who was high in favor at the capital. It told of the magnificent presents he lavished upon her, of his constant visits to her palace-like apartments, and gave a graphic description of the elegant *attelage*—his latest gift—bought with my money.

"I grew sick at heart. I had begun to suspect that he had tired of me, but I had not questioned his fidelity to his marriage vows, irksome though they might have become. I kept the paper, and on his return confronted him with it.

"With a string of oaths he showered curses on the head of whoever sent it to me, and declared it was all a falsehood, every word of

it. I hesitated to be convinced, and he finally threw off his mask, called me a little fool, bade me be content and not take on tragedy airs, they were not becoming to my Yankee blood. I had got my title, and it was genuine. He wanted a little diversion, and found it where he could. Madam D— was a charming woman, delightful in her artful innocence, or ignorance, and half the men in the city were running after her and raving over her superb singing. He boasted that he was the only one she cared for or admitted to her home, and that the paper was probably sent me by a rejected suitor in a fit of jealousy, intimating that he knew who it was and that a duel might follow.

“I was wild with rage and mortification, but for my child’s sake I tried to smother it as much as possible, and had he lived I should doubtless be at the Von Arnheim castle to-day; but God, whom I bitterly accused then, was merciful.

“In his second year the child was seized with a wasting fever, which baffled the efforts of the old physician who had ministered to all the Von Arnheims of his day, as well as those of the distinguished practitioner sent up from the city. After some weeks of suffering, the little creature breathed his last in my arms and was buried with all the pomp belonging to his rank, in the crypt beneath the chapel on the estate.

“During the child’s illness the Count remained most of the time at home, and was untiring in his efforts to care for the little one, to whom he seemed much attached; and there might have

been a reconciliation between us had I not chanced to overhear a fragment of a conversation not intended for my ears, in the servants' hall.

"They looked scared when they saw me, but I had heard enough to learn some interesting facts in regard to my husband's interest in one of his tenants, and very quietly set on foot an investigation into the truth of the gossip.

"I had all the pride of the Ferniers, my mother's family, and all the obstinacy of my father, and what I learned aroused the former and called out the latter. I concealed my knowledge and my intentions, and prepared to take a sudden, final leave of Austria and the man who was my husband.

"By a clever, yet a very simple ruse, taking advantage of a two days' absence of the Count, I secured my escape from the castle. Before his return, in an exceedingly well-conceived disguise, I was on my way by a very indirect and probably unthought of route to England, where I knew Uncle Horace then was. Taking lodgings in a retired part of the city of London, I sent by a trusty messenger a letter to his address.

"Before noon of the next day after my arrival in London my plans for my new life were mapped out, and I felt as safe from pursuit, or interference with more than the income of my mother's estate, as if I had been legally free from my now hated bonds.

"Practically, Countess Von Arnheim was dead; but, until her death could be proved, her Ameri-

can lawyer would refuse to surrender a penny of the property which, hers absolutely, would be the property of her husband at her death. I have many times thanked my dead father for the wisdom which led him to put out of my power the disposal of his property, and the stern and upright lawyer who had charge of all, and who, knowing absolutely nothing, though perhaps guessing much, could neither be coaxed nor driven. Count Von Arnheim, when he returned to the castle and found his wife missing, made a thorough search for her, going first to my cousin's in the city; but he was compelled to believe that Elizabeth knew nothing—her distress at his news was too genuine to be doubted. Then he came to America as fast as steam could bring him, and enlisting some detectives in the search, continued it; but as not a person in this country had any information concerning me later than his own, he finally gave it up, concluding I must be dead, and finding he could neither bully nor bribe Mr. X—, the guardian of my interests, returned to his own country.

“Meantime ‘Madame La Roche’ was quietly passing her days as the companion of a charming French woman of advanced age in a fine old château in Normandy, and trying to forget that she was ever anybody else.

“You will wonder that I dared be so rash as to remain in Europe. My mother's family were of Huguenot descent and prided themselves on preserving the language of their ancestors, speak-

ing it with accuracy and fluency. I always talked with my mother, when alone with her in my childhood, in French, and I also had a French *bonne*. I fancy I spoke it better than English. A dark stain applied to my hair and eyebrows made both black, and a judicious application of walnut juice made of a fair complexion a rich olive. A widow's cap and a careful attention to dress, with the assumption of a few mannerisms, completed a great transformation.

"My life at the château was pleasant and tranquil. Madame Greuzin's one passion was music, and as it was also mine I was free to cultivate it. I did really enjoy myself much of the time, when I succeeded in forgetting, and I remained with her until her death.

"Then I traveled for a few months, always keeping up my disguise, and at last, knowing that this home was open to me at any time, I determined to visit Uncle Horace. Barham was so far away from my former home and all my old acquaintances that I felt comparatively safe. The finding of you here nearly drove me away. I recognized you at once and dreaded a meeting; and as you know, always managed to keep my veil drawn over my face whenever there was the least danger of an encounter.

"Yesterday I received a paper which had been sent to my lawyer some time ago by one of the ex-attachés of the Austrian legation, a man whose devotion to American interests is well known, and who has kept Mr. X— constantly

informed of Count Von Arnheim's movements. In this paper was an account of a duel between the Count and a young German in which the former received his death wound. Mr. X—— had written immediately to his friend, and receiving full confirmation of its truth, sent me paper and letter, which came by early mail this morning.

"I shall at once take measures to establish my identity as Countess Von Arnheim; but as I have no wish to come before the public personally, I sent for Mr. Gray to beg him to act in my behalf with Mr. X——, and told him of my former acquaintance with you, whom he begged me to summon as a witness.

"I think I have explained all the mystery concerning us, except, perhaps, to say that Uncle Horace is Mr. Horace Septimus Whittemore, the husband of my mother's youngest sister, whose sudden death only a few months after their marriage has made of him almost a misanthrope, who gives his chief care and attention to his great and only hobby, floriculture, and who has aroused the curiosity of Barham by his studied avoidance of his kind."

It created rather more than a nine days' wonder when a little later Countess Von Arnheim appeared in her proper guise, and took the place which really belonged to her in the society of the city. By the tact and skilful management of her friends, the Lees, Dr. Ahlstrom, and one or two others whom they took into their confidence, the Countess herself was spared many of

the comments and stares which would have otherwise annoyed her, and her many deeds of charity, her friendliness and unaffected manner made it in time forgotten.

The change in Mr. Whittemore was as great as that in his niece. Now that there was nothing to conceal he went about among the townspeople, who found in him a friend and helper. He allied himself with Dr. Ahlstrom and his friends, and ably seconded all their efforts for the benefit of the city; indeed, he proved himself more efficient, being more fertile in expedients. He became a valuable friend of the Working Men's League, which was proud to claim him as one of its members. "I work," he said when he applied for membership, "and I promise to uphold the constitution. What more do you ask?" And he was unanimously voted in.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE "beautiful Countess," as she was called, became a great favorite in the city, but in no one of its pleasant homes was she more cordially welcomed than at Elmcroft. To Mrs. Hardman she opened her heart and found in her the love and sympathy needed to help her to stifle her regrets and to forget. Little Mollie's childish prattle and the caresses she so eagerly lavished on this new friend were most grateful. But to Dr. Ahlstrom she seemed to put on all the old armor of cool dignity and reserve which had characterized the girl whom he had known so many years before. His respect and admiration for her increased daily as he watched her efforts to aid in the work in which he was so deeply interested, and saw how gladly she was welcomed in the homes of sorrow and want. It seemed as if her presence alone brought help and comfort, and he knew that many a man as well as woman received his first uplifting from the depths of sin—aye, and despair even—through her efforts to aid. Indeed, Uncle Septimus sometimes laughingly remarked that his niece was "mother confessor" to half the denizens of the "Hill." Yet, though they worked so much together, it seemed to the Doctor that in spite of all his attempts to break down the barriers the distance between them was constantly widening.

One pleasant summer day the children from the "Hill" were invited to Sunnyside for a picnic. Mrs. Hardman, who was always glad to help in any undertaking which involved the pleasure of little people, was invited to assist and went over early in the afternoon, taking with her little Mollie, who was a great favorite with the young "Hillites." Dr. Ahlstrom, with the other members of the committee who had done and were doing so much for the district, were to go later for supper.

Little Mollie, who had been running about among the other children, petted and caressed, suddenly ran away from the group, and spying the Countess resting alone for a moment on a small knoll overlooking the pretty scene, ran up to her. Winding her chubby arms about her neck, she kissed her again and again, saying between kisses, "I love you! I love you! and I wish you were my own mamma! Won't you be? Say yes! say yes! do! do! Here's papa, I'll ask him;" and still clinging to her, in spite of the Countess's efforts to release herself, the little girl put the question in her quaint, childish fashion.

"I must have a mamma right off, papa! every little girl here has got one but me, and I've only a gran'ma"—she always called Mrs. Hardman by that endearing name. "I can't wait, and I just asked auntie"—her pet name for the Countess—"if she wouldn't be."

There was a laugh in Roger's eyes, and a blush on his cheek, which mounted to his hair

as he looked at the lady who had been unable to escape, and whose face was crimson, while her eyes sought the ground as she turned away.

"Don't go, Countess! I want to hear the rest!" and his face grew grave as he noted the tears which glistened on her eyelashes, and the quiver of her lips.

"Well, what did she say, pet?"

"She didn't tell me! and I saw you coming, and I thought you'd ask her, maybe, 'cause I wanted you to, and, and, won't you? please! please!" and letting go her hold of the Countess, the little girl danced up and down, clapping her tiny hands.

Dr. Ahlstrom was close beside the lady, and he whispered softly:

"Shall it not be so, dear Countess? Little Mollie's wish has long been mine. Look up and let me read my answer in the dear brown eyes."

A shower of tears, which she could not control, was falling, but with a brave effort she lifted her eyes to his, and he was answered. In a voice tremulous with emotion he thanked her for the priceless gift which he had long coveted.

They were very quiet when they rejoined their friends; but two, at least, rejoiced as they read in their faces the new bond which united this man and this woman, who had each suffered so deeply, though in different ways. Miss Lee could not understand the exceeding warmth with which, after congratulating the Countess, Gray turned to Roger; but Roger understood and re-

joiced in the knowledge that a new hope was struggling in his friend's heart which he would lose no time in proving. As he shook his hand in parting, his "God speed you, my friend!" had a significance which Gray did not fail to understand.

It was late when Elsie Lee sought her pillow that August night, for Richard Gray, who felt that with his friend's betrothal the last barrier had been swept away, had told her the story of his love for Mrs. Cameron. That love had grown less and less strong since he had come to know Elsie, and when he searched his heart to find if aught remained to wrong this newer love, he found it had become a simple friendship in which he could gladly join her husband with herself. Elsie Lee had no foolish pride. She had learned to see and understand the nobility of the man in the years she had known him, and had to acknowledge to herself that she had learned to watch for his coming and to think first of *his* approval of her work. She knew she could safely trust her life to him, and gladly gave the answer for which he hoped.

There was no reason for delay; and on Christmas morning St. James's church, which had been beautifully trimmed with laurel, evergreen and holly berries for the holy season, was decorated within the chancel with large and beautiful palms and magnificent pink and white chrysanthemums. The beautiful marble font was a mass of pink roses and white lilies, and clusters of roses and lilies adorned the organ front.

The bells rang out the old, old anthem, "Peace on earth, good will to men," which had sounded over the city on each recurring Christmas morn; and then a louder and a merrier peal carried to many homes the knowledge of the joy and peace which this day had brought to four whose lives had opened upon the dawn of a new life. Then, when the joyful tidings had been wafted everywhere, the old bell ringer, who had rung the chimes on many similar occasions but had vowed that this should surpass all his previous efforts, skilfully changed without a break, as the carriages drew up before the door, into the sweetest, most musical strains the chimes had ever rung; strains which, the ringer declared, he would never ring again, and which were his gift to the brides—"Golden Wedding Bells." To this music the organ lent its voice, and a wave of melody so sweet that it seemed to the listening throng to blend the harmony of earth with that of heaven floated through the church. The white-robed choir boys took up the song as, in robes of purest white, her mother's bridal veil fastened by orange blossoms on her golden hair, and leaning on her father's arm, Elsie Lee passed down the aisle. Close behind her in soft gray satin, her only ornament a magnificent sapphire cross fastening the costly lace upon her bosom, came Countess Von Arnheim and Uncle Septimus. At the chancel rail the good rector, with Richard Gray and Roger Ahlstrom, awaited them.

Elsie Lee and Richard Gray were the first to say the words which united two lives into one, and those who could see their faces would always remember the light which rested upon them. They stood aside and their two attendants took their places. Those who were nearest saw the white lips of this second bride and the slight shiver which seized her for a moment as she placed her hand in that of the man beside her; but the firm, warm pressure of the hand which closed over it must have brought reassurance, for the dark eyes raised to his were clear and untroubled.

And had Roger forgotten? Nay! Deep in his heart was a closed door, on which was written "Sacred!" But there was room for this new love, which he knew could not defraud the dead and would bless the living. The good rector's voice had in it, so it seemed to his listeners, a stronger feeling as he pronounced for these the closing words—"What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The four stood close together while the benediction was pronounced, and at its close passed down the aisle in the face of the large audience which crowded the church, Dr. Ahlstrom and his wife leading. Before them, in their path even to the outer door and across the snow-covered sidewalk to the carriages in waiting, little children scattered roses.

It was an event long to be remembered, and the rejoicing was sincere among all classes who knew these men and these women.

The wedding presents were numerous and characteristic of the givers. There were the handsome, costly gifts of those whose purses were not limited, and the bit of carving or needle work from those who fashioned it themselves with much expenditure of time and labor, their sole capital. But perhaps the gift most prized by Dr. Ahlstrom and which touched both most deeply was one which the Doctor received on Christmas morning from the Working Men's League.

In a handsome casket of blue velvet lined with white satin lay a booklet of white ivory, with binding on back and edges of silver. On the outside of the front cover was a fine engraving of the Ahlstrom building, where, on a window of the second story, could be seen painted on the glass, "Barham Working Men's League." Inside an excellent portrait of the Doctor adorned the title page; then followed a beautifully engrossed copy of the constitution and by-laws, with a list of the charter members and of all members to date.

A silver plate on the cover of the casket bore this inscription:

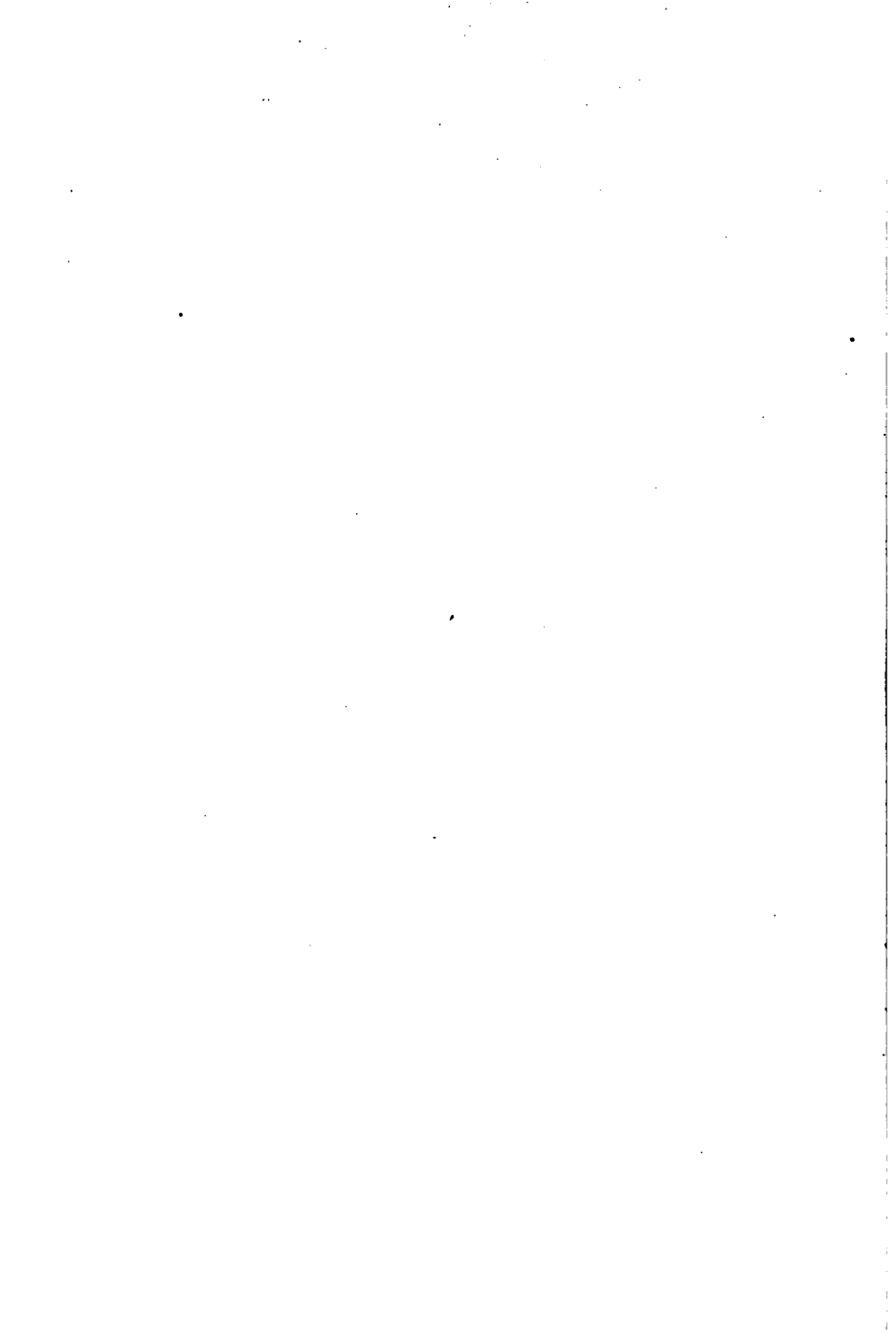
TO ROGER V. AHLSTROM
THE MOST SINCERE AND UNSELFISH FRIEND
THE WORKING MAN EVER HAD

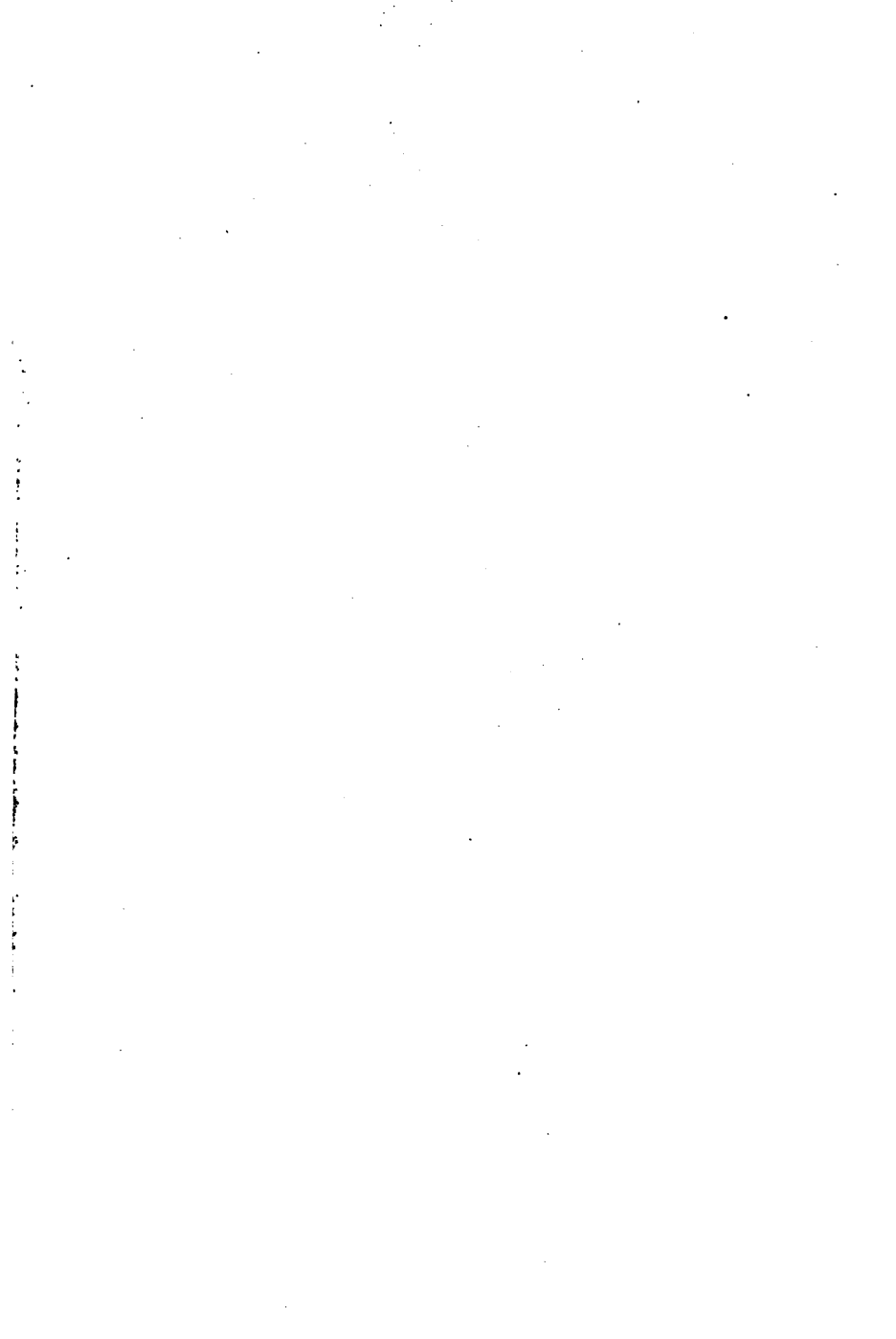
"Seven years to-day since I came to Barham!" Roger Ahlstrom was saying to himself as he stood at an open window looking out on

the lawn, where a pretty blue-eyed maiden of ten summers was weaving a chain of buttercups to hang about the neck of a wee little woman who, resting in her nurse's arms, was reaching out her tiny hands for the bright flowers and cooing a wordless song which seemed full of sweetness to the listeners.

"Seven years to-day!" and he turned as the door opened and drew the beautiful woman who entered into his arms. "Did you remember it, dear? Seven years since I entered this house, homesick, lonely, and almost weary of life. Two years full of hard work and anxious care, a year when the shadows lifted a little, another when I watched the dawn, and three years of perfect happiness, such as I believe few men can know or understand—thanks to you, my precious wife."

END.







APR 25 1911

MAY 18 1911

JAN 3 1912

~~MAY 23 1912~~

BOOK DIVISION

58 25 30
JAN 28 1912

LIBRARY

LIBRARY

John Varholm's heir, or, The Denwol
Widener Library 003900884



3 2044 080 895 915